THE COMMENTS OF BAGSHOT

J. A. SPENDER

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EDITED BY

J. A. SPENDER

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

WHILE the chapters collected into this volume were passing through the "Westminster Gazette," many inquiries reached me about the identity of Bagshot. The answer to these questions would add nothing to what is contained in the chapters themselves. The merit of Bagshot, if any, as a commentator lies in his point of view. His calling, for instance, enables him to know something of affairs, while it compels him to refrain from partisanship; and his attitude towards life in general is roughly on the same lines. His greatest advantage of all is perhaps that, since he has passed from the scene, it is useless to dispute with him.

There comes back to me a saying of his own that "one man's paradox is another man's platitude," and since he never aspires

to paradox, I know not to what deep boring§ below platitude some of his observations may seem to descend, if they encounter the wrong reader or even the right reader in the wrong mood. In such a case, let the reader blame the editor.

J. A. S.

THE
COMMENTS OF BAGSHOT

CHAPTER I

A Word about Bagshot and his Diaries

SOMEWHAT to my surprise, when my friend Bagshot died about six months ago, I found myself named executor in his will. He left me a legacy of £100 for my pains, and, what I valued more, his small and select library of about a thousand books, and certain diaries and manuscript note-books which were stacked together in the central cupboard of his chief bookcase. The note-books contained a variety of observations about men and things, which he had apparently been in the habit of jotting down at odd moments; and when I came to look at the books I found that there was scarcely one of them which was not annotated on the fly-leaf at the end with some query or

comment which had occurred to him in reading it. Some of these comments had at first sight scarcely the remotest connection with the book in which it was written; but, having known him well, I was generally able, on reflection, to discover a connecting-link. Nothing, I am sure, was farther from his thoughts than that any of these observations would ever see the light. The note-books are quite disconnected, and there is no arrangement or plan about his jottings. He set them down anyhow and on any subject exactly as they came to him. He has often told me that, though literature was, in a sense, his main interest, he had no faculty of consecutive writing, and I know from experience that it was pain and labour to him to answer any but a formal letter. His papers, nevertheless, have interested me so much that I am tempted to make a few selections from them and to offer them to the public.

A few words in explanation about the man himself. Bagshot is not his real name, but the idea of publicity would have been so distasteful to him, that I have decided to veil

his identity. He died at the comparatively early age of fifty-five, after more than thirty years in the public service. He did well, but not quite brilliantly, as a public servant, and was in the last years head of a department and earned a substantial salary. No one heard of him outside his department, and, having done his duty conscientiously, he considered that his private life was his own to spend in the way most congenial to his own tastes. He was a bachelor with about a dozen real friends, and until he was forty-five or thereabouts he lived in rooms not far from Burlington House. After that he moved out of London, and established himself near St. Mary Cray, which, he used to say, was the nearest piece of real country within reach of a Government office. Here he had his more intimate friends to stay with him, and I remember nothing pleasanter than a bachelor week-end at his house. He was a good scholar, and had only just missed a fellowship at Oxford, and though he disclaimed every kind of expert knowledge, he had excellent taste, and I have known many a professional critic ask his judgment on a work

of art. He was wholly unambitious, and extremely kind and charitable. He used to say that the chief merit of the public service was that it enabled you to live without the constant sense of competition with rivals who would deprive you of your daily bread if you did not deprive them of theirs. I suspect that the chief reason he remained a bachelor was that he had to support a mother and two sisters out of his official salary, for he would have made an admirable husband and father, and was capable of warm attachments. In appearance he was more interesting than handsome. I remember him as a tall man, clean-shaven, with somewhat irregular features, and piercing brown eyes. You could not be long with him without noticing his queer habit of raising his left eyebrow when anything interested him. His attitude towards life was—or so it seemed to his friends—a half-humorous interrogative, but he was essentially benevolent, and would insist with much vehemence that men in the lump were a great deal better than they were commonly supposed to be.

I thought I knew him well, but there was

much in his papers that surprised me. He seems to have meditated on a great many subjects on which he never talked, at least to me, though he was possibly less reticent to others. Like most unmarried men, he had careful theories about friendship, some of them, I conjecture, founded on an estrangement from an old friend which troubled him greatly during the last years of his life. In one of his note-books I find these entries under date 14th November, 1896:

Theories about Friendship

> There are very few friends with whom you can be equally intimate on all subjects. Discover the range of your intimacy with each friend, and never go beyond it.
>
> Nothing is so perilous to friendship as to presume intimacy with a friend on a subject on which he is a stranger to you.
>
> Reserve is essential to an enduring friendship.

The last sentence is repeated again and again at later dates, as though he was perpetually warning himself against a tendency to transgress his own rule. I imagine he meant that a man might be a friend to you

in politics, but a stranger to you in religion, a friend to you in literature, but a stranger to you in philosophy, and yet he by no means intends to bar discussion between friends on questions on which they may differ, for a little later (10th December of the same year) he quotes with high approval Carlyle's description of himself and Sterling as "except in opinion not disagreeing." But he is persistent about "the subjects on which your friend is a stranger to you," and I find the expression slightly varied at a later date:

> There are subjects on which an intimacy is possible between strangers which would be fatal to friendship.
>
> The wise penitent chooses a confessor who is unknown to him.

I wish I knew the incident which gave rise to these ejaculations, but, even as they stand, they throw a new light on Bagshot and explain much that was puzzling to me in his lifetime.

Some Friends described

There is much more on the subject of friends and friendship, to which I shall return another time. He had a pleasing habit

of summing up his friends in little *aperçus* which I find scattered about his note-books. Here are a few entries taken at random:

C. "has the courage which bears an intolerable toothache with fortitude for fear of going to the dentist."

Of L. he writes that "he has a tideless nature beating against rocks."

Of Y.—that he is "like a frozen waterfall. He comes clattering down to the precipice and preserves all the forms of animated and glittering motion, and then hangs frosted over the edge."

G. (aged eighty-three) is "like an ancient olive, with a mere shell for its trunk, yet indomitably throwing up new shoots on top—green against the grey."

Of M. he says: "Cut him open and you will find a clergyman inside." (This is put in inverted commas as if he had read it somewhere or someone else had said it, but I cannot trace it to its source.)

Of another, M. (a well-known and distinguished man), he says: "He is generally supposed to be the least ambitious of

men, but he is consumed with an ambition to surpass himself."

The conversation of D. is "like the noise of a train in a tunnel"—one idea deafening you with its echo.

S. is not a visionary, as his friends say; he is merely hyperopic—*i.e.*, constitutionally incapable of focussing his vision on any near object. His distant vision is no better than other people's, usually a little worse.

A. is like a bridge over a mountain torrent. He joins two precipices, and the stream of controversy passes beneath him.

C. is without the sense of co-operation. He is nearly always right, but generally fails, because he likes to keep his wisdom to himself. It pleases him more to show you how wrong you were than to have had your help in doing the thing right. A sagacious, unpopular, and infructuous character.

Talking with D. is like glissading down a snow slope—delightful while it lasts, but you are soon at the bottom. If you aren't careful, he'll take you over the precipice.

I quote these not to claim any special wisdom or profundity for them, but rather to explain the disposition of my friend by his observations on other people.

Bagshot's Religion

Bagshot loved theology, and plunged with zest into ecclesiastical controversies, but I never could discover what his religious opinions were. As to the part which religion should play in the world he was quite positive. I find him saying (19th April, 1897):

> An opposition is as necessary in daily life as in a Parliamentary assembly. The part which religion should play is that of a permanent Opposition—an Opposition which never hopes to become a Government.
>
> This *rôle* is fatally compromised when a Church is established.
>
> Established churches must be conservative, but a conservative religion is a contradiction in terms.
>
> The conversion of Constantine was the greatest disaster to Christianity. It was the beginning of its secular bondage.
>
> Only stupid people sneer at the man

who says, "Credo quia impossibile." To have faith in the impossible is precisely the function of religion.

The State and religion may be in acute conflict, and both may be right, but though the State may yield to religion, religion should never yield to the State.

Religion cannot accept the protection of the State without binding itself to uphold the State and its law and policy. The effect is automatic with an established clergy, though they are mostly unaware of it.

Religion dispenses with law nearly as often as it enforces law. One of the finest texts in the Gospels is the admonition addressed to the disciple plucking corn on the Sabbath day: "Blessed art thou, if thou knowest what thou doest; but if not, thou art accursed and a breaker of the law." This occurs in only one manuscript of the Gospels, and is declared to be an interpolation. I am convinced that it is genuine.

"But Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground." What did

he write? (A great subject for a religious poem.)

I should give a wrong impression of Bagshot if I said that he was intolerant about anything, and some of his warmest friends were among the Established clergy, but on this subject of religion and the State he was unyielding. Not that he took the Nonconformist view or had any prejudices against the Anglican Church except as an establishment.

On almost the last page of his latest diary I find a passage which expresses a mood that I was often aware of in him:

> Have you ever stood outside a public meeting and heard the applause and the interruptions, but not the speaker? How absurd and meaningless it sounds! There are moments when one stands outside life in just such a way. One hears the noises, but has no clue to the meaning.

The search for a sequence

A month after this was written he was in his grave, but I do not believe that he wrote it with any premonition of his end, which he

had no reason to expect. Rather it represents a mood which was frequent with him throughout his life. Over and over again I have heard him say "I have lost the clue to things," or of a particular controversy that it conveyed no meaning to him. His interest in politics was keen when aroused, but there were whole classes of subjects to which he could not be persuaded to pay the faintest attention, and others on which he would blaze intermittently and quite briefly. Though not at all a pedant, he was for ever trying to discover some logic or sequence in things, and he habitually talked of the unexpected as if it were an offence against good manners. "The gross impropriety of this event must be obvious to you," he wrote about some untoward happening—an earthquake or a foreign complication, I have quite forgotten what—which cut across his scheme of things. But these traits I shall best illustrate when I come to give further extracts from his own comments.

CHAPTER II

About Bores and Boredom

BAGSHOT is gone, and I have already explained that he left me no authority to publish any of his writings. But to acquit him of all blame in the matter let me begin this chapter by quoting the first entry—dated 1st January, 1906—in the very last of the note-books that have come into my possession:

> We all denounce bores, but, while we do so, let us always remember that there is nobody who isn't a bore to somebody. The most certain mark of a bore is a complete assurance that he is an exception to this rule.
>
> While I am denouncing A as a bore to B, ten to one he is denouncing me as a bore to C.
>
> * Therefore let me be careful to confine my moralizings to my note-books.

The last sentence is starred and endorsed in the margin as "Good resolution for 1906." In letting his moralizings escape from his note-books, I feel it is due to his memory to quote this passage.

Having thus discharged my conscience, let me go on to quote a few more of Bagshot's observations upon bores and boredom:

The worst attribute of the bore is that he loves you. That adds remorse to pain.

Bores are dreadfully intolerant of each other. Never ask two to meet, or you will have both on your hands.

The true bore is seldom stupid, and often very clever; but a diet of pearls is extremely boring to the swine.

Clever men forget that stupid ones can be bored. None is so merciless as the clever bore.

My friend B. is an epicure in bores. I saw him the other night absorbed in the conversation of W. (a notorious bore). He took an exquisite pleasure in studying the natural history of the bore as exempli-

fied in this extreme specimen. He begged me afterwards to bring them together again that he might have a further opportunity of research.

Bores are generally called well-meaning, for the essence of their infirmity is that they are unconscious of it. Some few, however, are malignant. These are determined to "talk to you for your good." That is malice prepense.

It is a presumption against a man to have the word too much in his mouth. The easily bored are nearly always bores. It is possible to be a bore about bores.

That last sentence warns me to shut down these quotations, but I have let them run to this length because they illustrate a certain phase of Bagshot's character. I remember well how vehemently he used to inveigh against the "tyranny of clever men." He was not without a suspicion of cleverness himself, yet he had a rooted aversion to the people commonly called "clever." Most of them, he used to say, were fundamentally stupid; and one man, reputed to be very

clever, he described as having "a complacent, *borné* intelligence with a fraudulent top-dressing." In another entry he tells us that one of the chief wants of the day is a "league of ordinary mortals to put the clever people in their proper place."

* * * * *

The Permanent and the Political

There is a touch of the Civil Service disposition in some of his observations, but he had a clear eye for the characteristics of "the Permanents":

> The ideal condition for the permanent Civil servant is that in which he rules the country and the politician takes the blame.
>
> The ideal condition for the politician is that in which he takes the praise and the permanent does the work.
>
> The fairest compromise is to give the permanent the work and the politician the blame. This conduces to the moral welfare of both parties.
>
> Rule for Civil servants: "Oh, take the cash, and let the credit go."

This was written in 1884, but there is a note added to it at a later date, January, 1906, a very few months before his death. "After further experience," he writes in this note, "I am greatly struck with the loyalty of both parties to this compact. Some few politicians, such as —— and —— (two eminent names which I omit), have grabbed the praise and shirked the work, but hardly any have shirked the blame. I scarcely know a case in which a politician has thrown the blame on permanent servants even for the gross mistakes of which he was wholly innocent. People talk slightingly of politicians, but there is no trade in which there is a higher standard of loyalty." This was a frequent theme of his, and I have often heard him regret that there was no first-rate biography of a public man written by a permanent servant who had been closely in contact with him on the administrative side.

The note-books contain also sundry observations about promotions and appointments. Some of them apply to special cases long forgotten, but others have a wider application:

Promotion by merit is not at all the same thing as promotion by ability. Clever men mostly forget this. Nothing is so embarrassing as unsuitable ability.

The eleventh-hour man is absolutely essential to the service.

It is the highest self-discipline to receive the eleventh-hour man without resentment.

The "Eleventh-Hour Man" and the Enemies of Youth

The "eleventh-hour man" is, I take it, an allusion to the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard. Bagshot himself, as I know, suffered severely on one occasion from an eleventh-hour man, and with all his philosophy it was, I imagine, a severe act of self-discipline to receive without resentment the brilliant newcomer, hoisted over the heads of the labourers who had borne the burden and heat of the day. Till I stumbled on these passages in his note-book I had never known him make an allusion to this incident except to protest that the appointment was admirable, and most salutary to his Department. His objection to promotion by seniority was, indeed, I think, carried to rather extreme lengths,

and he sometimes forgot the discouragement of competent hard work which might have followed from too perpetual incursions of the eleventh-hour man. His idea, however, is insisted upon again and again:

> Exceptional ability must not be required to graduate.
>
> Hostility to youth is the worst vice of the middle-aged.
>
> It is silly to quarrel with the chamois because he has not come by the mule-path.
>
> I hate to hear people saying, "He is young, he must wait; he will get plenty of chances." How do they know? Could Keats have waited, or Shelley, or Byron, or Burns?
>
> They said it of W., and pushed him back. Three years later he died.
>
> It is a cheap generosity which promises the future in compensation for the present. Give youth its present, and leave its future to God.

The last three of these notes come together, and they are tinged with a rather unusual

emotion. I imagine that he had been a warm friend to W.

* * * * *

About Politics and Democracy

Being a public servant, Bagshot was not in the ordinary sense a politician, nor had he the party-political mind. But his instincts were Liberal, even in some respects revolutionary, and he had no patience with croakers. Here is a characteristic entry from his 1890 note-book:

> The weaknesses commonly attributed to democracy by the pessimists are mostly weaknesses inherent in collective action of any kind—oligarchic, aristocratic, or democratic. They could be avoided only by absolutism which is impossible in modern States.

A few pages on I find this:

> The most dangerous demagogues are the clever Conservatives who despise the the people.
>
> In public affairs the cynic is more pernicious than the demagogue.

He returns to the attack on cleverness a little later in the same note-book, and I suspect that he was suffering much at this time from a notoriously clever man who held high office in those years:

> Do not seek far-fetched explanations of the stupidities of clever people. In public affairs things are nearly always as silly as they seem.
>
> A motto for Cabinets: Twenty wise men may easily add up into one fool.
>
> Cleverness and stupidity are generally in the same boat against wisdom.

I spoke in my last chapter of his constant search for some logic or sequence in current events. Here are one or two extracts which illustrate this tendency:

> History, we are told, is past politics, but it is harder and more important to conceive present politics as current history.
>
> To see things *sub specie aeternitatis* is for angels and philosophers, but a politician may try to see them *sub specie historiae*.

> Conceive of your life as an unfinished biography, and try to discover the next chapter and the end.

That I gather from other entries in his diaries was his habitual mood about his own life.

CHAPTER III

Immortality and Animal Instinct

BAGSHOT'S comments by no means all of them take the epigrammatic form of some I have quoted. I find a longer passage, for instance, written at the end of a forgotten book on animal instinct:

> The problem of immortality is for practical people the problem of memory. All the metaphysical problems are combined in the question, "Is there that which remembers?" If we could conceive a man to have irretrievably lost his memory, that man would have lost his immortality. The waters of Lethe are fatal to the eternal life. The question "Does man survive?" may, therefore, be re-stated as "Will man remember?"
>
> The instinct of the animal is its racial immortality—the hoarded memory which is the common property of the race, and which gives each member of it his share of

its continuous existence. The bird which builds its nest untaught, exactly according to the pattern of its race, is not *a* bird but *the* bird, *the* immortal bird of immemorial age and unbroken memory. The animal is so generalized that it repeats its *self* and perpetuates its identity while the race lasts. This *self* never dies, and it is the animal soul.

So far as man becomes individualized, he forfeits this racial immortality. The hoarded memory dies down, as the individual emerges, and in the "progress from homogeneity to heterogeneity" he loses his racial soul. Does he, in compensation, gain an individual soul? So far from merging man in the race, the theory of evolution extricates him, individualizes him, leaves him solitary and unique—a being with his own memory, experience, and characteristics for whose extinction the survival of the race can offer no compensation to nature. If the whole purpose of nature is the making of individuals, can we believe that nature extinguishes them when made?

I seem to see in the scheme of things an ascent from the racial immortality to the individual immortality — the individual gradually emerging from the dim mass of general life, losing, as he advances, more and more of his connections with this general life, but gaining by the same process his individual immortal soul; becoming more helpless as an animal, but more masterful as a man. Large numbers of the human race seem as yet to be in the position in which they have lost their privileges in the animal world, and not gained their standing in the human world. But the whole process moves, I am persuaded, to the making of the individual immortal—a being possessing in itself the same undying memory and consciousness that are the collective possession of the animal world.

The Eternal Life

Judging from his note-books, Bagshot dwelt on this theme and wrestled with it during many hours of his leisure. There is another entry about the same date which is worth quoting:

In all literature there are no words

which have affected me so profoundly throughout my life as Aristotle's ἐφ' ὅσον ἐνδέχεται ἀθανατίζειν.[1] They are untranslatable; no modern language has any words which convey the depth of their meaning. Implied in them is the Christian conception of "the eternal life," but their value is that they are pre-Christian, and independent of all mystic beliefs about another world. The eternity of things is here asserted as the basis of the temporal. It is the last word on the subject. Whatever he believes about another world, a man must live in this world *as if he were immortal.* This alone lightens the burden of his years and enables him to look steadily at the future.

The Secret of Youth

In the same vein is a note which Bagshot has written in pencil on the fly-leaf at the end of Morley's "Life of Gladstone":

If you are feeling old and are oppressed with the sense that your days are few and the future is little to you, go to this book and see where Gladstone was at your age,

[1] So far as possible to live as an immortal.

and what he had in front of him. Yesterday I was forty-nine, and all day long I struggled with the thought that the fiftieth year was the beginning of the end. It comforted me amazingly to find that at this age Mr. Gladstone had not yet got into his second volume.

A few months later he seems to have taken the book down again and to have added another note:

It matters little, as a matter of fact, whether death be near or far provided you can keep this sense of the future. An interest in public affairs is a preservative of youth because it takes a man out of the individual life into the general life and projects his mind into a future not limited by his own existence. He is bound as far as possible to live the life of the immortal.

The Poetry of the Future

The same strain, slightly varied, is to be found in another reflection of about the same date:

A great *new* building—not one of your shoddy modern hotels, but something

noble and permanent—affects me with precisely the same sense of poetry as a great *old* building. This morning I stood watching them at work on the new War Office, and the thought came over me, What will it witness which I shall not see? Answers to riddles innumerable, agonies of wars undreamt of, hopes, fears, passions of multitudes yet to be born. I see it immensely historical with the history of the future.

A Question about Death

Let me finish this graver kind of quotation by one more passage dealing with the subject of death:

> Why is it that in death the sense of bereavement is felt by the living, but not by the dying? Why should those who are departing from life be supposed to feel the separation less keenly than those who are left behind? Most of those who have been to the verge of death will tell you that they felt no pang of the emotion which they would have suffered if watching at the deathbed of others whom they loved. None of the poetry or literature of the

subject imputes a sense of bereavement to the departed.

Is this merely a result of the religious teaching that it is far better to depart, or is it some deep instinct which reassures the dying?

* * * * *

The "most disagreeable fact in the world"

Let me wind up this chapter by a few passages in a lighter vein. Bagshot's transitions are very abrupt, and I will not endeavour to soften them. This should please the Food Reformers:

It is a pity that over-eating is not followed by the same visibly scandalous consequences as over-drinking. There would be more thin people in the world and less gluttony, but hardly anyone would be sober at the end of a London dinner-party.

It is ultimately the most disagreeable fact in the world that living things live on each other. In this respect man is divided from the brutes by the cook. There may be pleasures unrealized by man in the sense of smell, but I am devoutly thankful

that the sight of a flock of sheep in a field does not appeal to my appetite as it apparently does to my dog's. Imagine a pastoral landscape with cattle in it pervaded by an odour of roast beef.

The expression "dumb animal" is meaningless. There are hardly any "dumb animals," but the horse, to his great misfortune, is one of them. Who would dare whip a horse if he cried out like a dog? Imagine the uproar in London or Paris or Naples!

The common saying that you should know everything of something and something of everything Bagshot paraphrases as follows:

It is necessary to fathom one's ignorance on one subject in order to discover how little one knows on other subjects.

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CHAPTER IV

Shyness a Vice

BAGSHOT was generally counted a shy man and his manners were somewhat embarrassed. Yet, oddly enough, there was hardly any imputation that he more disliked than that of shyness. I ventured once to suggest to him that he should try to overcome this fault, and he was genuinely surprised and not a little offended by the criticism. For shyness, he said with some vehemence, was either odious or silly—odious if, as in nine cases out of ten, it arose from self-consciousness or vanity; and silly if, as in the tenth case, it arose from timidity. Nervous a man might be on fit occasion—if, for instance, he was going to an interview on which his fate depended—but only fools were shy. Then, turning on me with some acerbity, he begged me to mention an occasion on which he had misconducted himself in either way.

I entirely disclaimed the meaning he had read into my friendly remonstrance, but I pointed out that only the previous week in my house, when a party of young people had drawn us old ones into some improvised charades, he had slunk aside looking the picture of embarrassed wretchedness and hidden himself downstairs in my study till the cast was made up. To this he made the astonishing answer that, if I had only given him the false white beard and wig which I had so thoughtfully provided for myself on this occasion, he would have played my part himself, and played it—he hinted—a good deal better than I had played it. He said this as if his meaning was completely self-evident, and would have dismissed the subject but for my puzzled "What *do* you mean?" This set him off on to an excursion on "false beards," which, so far as I remember it, was to this effect:

About "false beards"

Men are divided into two classes, those who can and those who cannot throw off their own personality. The former are dramatic by nature, and have no sense of

the absurdity of impersonating someone else. The latter are always haunted by this sense of absurdity. I belong to the latter class, and I pity the actor who has to appear with his own face and in his ordinary coat and trousers, pretending to be someone else in a modern play. To me the situation only becomes tolerable when I can disguise my face, and with a false beard and wig I feel somehow that the worst of it is mitigated. This is not shyness, as you call it, but merely a natural incapacity to take on another personality. The same thing runs through literature and the arts. I have the greatest admiration for the work of H. and S. (naming two distinguished imaginative writers), but if I had written their books (of which I am quite incapable) I could not, for all the applause and fame, have persuaded myself to put my name to them. Such a public impersonation of fictitious characters would be fatal to my sense of myself. But I can conceive myself writing anonymously for newspapers without any sense of discomfort. The "we" of journalism is the

false beard and wig which saves you from the constant intrusion of yourself before the public, and enables you to live your own life within the mask. That is a positive necessity to the non-dramatic kind of man.

The Dramatic Temperament and the Artistic

I remember objecting that he was here confusing two things—the impersonations of the actor and the emotional outpourings of such a writer as S., who was deliberately attempting to express *himself* to the public. Bagshot, however, would not admit that the distinction held good. The relation of such a man as S. to his public was essentially a dramatic relation, and his constant appearances in his own name led him to dramatize his own character. He had a fancy picture of himself as a man from whom certain postures were expected, and he could not take up his pen without putting this imaginary figure between the public and himself. He wrote quite differently in his private letters, and again he would write quite differently if he wrote anonymously. Which of his assumed characters was the real man it was impossible

to say, for the writing of imaginative literature had this curious effect of disintegrating personality, and strongly individual men were incapable of it. This was really what was meant by the artistic temperament—an unstable personality moving in many worlds, and not firmly anchored in any.

An entry which I find in one of his notebooks about this date is in keeping with this discourse:

> The misfortune of the "artistic temperament" is that so many people have the temperament and so few the art. We should never excuse the temperament, unless we are sure of the art.

There are many other entries on this subject to which I may return another time. A little incident, however, comes back to me which may be recorded in this place. I said to him once that a certain notorious poetaster excused his excesses on the ground that Byron had lived a shocking life. He replied curtly that Admiral B. (a blameless and Church-going acquaintance of us both) might as well elope with the rector's wife, and justify the

proceeding by the plea that Nelson had carried on with Lady Hamilton.

* * * * *

The "Unexplored Interior"

Bagshot seldom, if he could avoid it, spent a night in London; but I find this note dated from an address in Gower Street, 10 p.m., 9th January, 1903:

> To most people the vision of a great city is that of streets, parks, river, bridges, and endless bustling crowds in the open under the sky. But the idea which most weighs on me as I sit here alone is that of a vast unexplored interior, with a million forms of hidden life. If a path could be driven through the heart of it, so that we might walk under the roofs from the prosperous West to the last of the mean streets, we should begin to lift the curtain on humanity. Would Dives venture to return to his palace and fare sumptuously every day if he were compelled to make that pilgrimage once a week?
>
> The brain reels when it tries to realize this life. Within a mile of me at this moment—the dinner-party, the death-bed, the

woman in travail, children tucked away in comfortable night-nurseries, children swarming together in one verminous bed, elegant loungers in drawing-rooms, roysterers in public-houses, beautiful empty rooms, squalid crowded tenements, endless human cells, with each its own separate life shut off from all other life, a thousand thousand romances, tragedies, histories, all running at once, and with complete disregard of each other. And then the emotions, anxieties, pains, pleasures, griefs, hopes, and fears falling on each man or woman as if he or she were the one being in the world! I get at once the sense of the swarming of humanity and of its intense separateness within its little compartments. The real city is the city under the roof; all the rest is coming and going. We say we know London. We know at most the outside of a few score of streets, and the inside of about six houses—if so many. Beyond is impenetrable mystery.

Side by side with this I may put another

In Praise of Man

passage which comes a little later in the same note-book:

> Year by year, as I grow older, I get more impatient with the misanthropes. Say what one will about the vices and follies of man, how immense are his virtues! Think steadily, if you can, of the incredible things that he suffers—his hard toil, his struggle for bread and home, the smallness of his reward, his undeserved calamities, the slaughter of his affections, and through it all his indomitable spirit and courage as he gathers himself from the dust or the mire, and plants his feet again on his rough and uncertain road. The shallow rich talk much of the turbulence of the poor and their tendency to agitate. It is the patience of the poor which most strikes those who know them.

About Wealth and Poverty

The note-books abound in observations about wealth and poverty, and Bagshot had a theory that everyone should be taught the elementary facts about the distribution of wealth, so that he might "place" himself correctly in

the material scale. Here is a characteristic passage:

> If I were a soul trembling on the threshold of birth into this world, and my place had to be assigned to me by an impartial drawing of lots, the odds would be heavily in favour of my being a Chinaman, or a Hindu, or a negro. If I escaped that, and were happy enough to draw an English lot, the chances would still be nearly four to one that I should be born into the working-class. That I should come again into such a home as I am now living in, a home furnished with the modest comforts and luxuries that an income of £1,200 a year can provide, or get the start in life that parents with such an income might afford me, would be an incredible piece of good fortune which I should have no right whatever to expect.
>
> An income of a thousand pounds a year and upwards is, materially speaking, a rare and privileged state of being which *dehumanizes* those who attain to it or inherit it. They are so far removed from the

common human lot that, except imaginatively, they have no experience or knowledge of it.

These fortunate few, nevertheless, habitually talk as if they were the world, and nearly all modern literature proceeds on that assumption. That accounts for the divorce in the Western world between life and letters. All modern letters are "polite." "Humane letters" have yet to be.

A new form of Endowment

Bagshot used to say that one of the advantages of not being a practical politician was that you were free to theorize without being called a fool for your pains. So, for the moment, I may close with this quite unpractical piece of theorizing which he has scribbled on the fly-leaf of a recent book on Socialism:

> The Socialists are quite right when they wish to raise the minimum wage, but they are wholly mistaken when they speak of the equalizing of wealth as an important object for society to pursue, except so far as it is necessary for that purpose. . . . I look forward to a state of society in which every man shall be able to earn sufficient

to provide air-space, decent food, and clothing, as well as education and rational enjoyment for himself and his family, and in which no man shall be able to plead economic conditions to avert the penalties —compulsory labour, loss of rights, etc.— with which he will then inexorably be visited for failing to do these things. But I do not at all look forward to any state of society in which, above this level, there shall not be all degrees of wealth and a sufficient number of people living in the style of the "magnificent man" in Aristotle. The moderately well-to-do would gain no more by levelling these more fortunate beings than I should gain if Lord Rothschild became bankrupt to-morrow and his property were scattered to the four winds.

The real difficulty in a modern society is to get the wealth into the hands of the "magnificent men"—the men who have a genius for spending at all corresponding to the genius which the modern rich man has for acquiring. Not only is there no connection between these two things, but

there is an actual conflict between them. The presumption is that a man with the genius for acquiring will be a man without the gift of spending. Half the world seems to be born with the one and the remaining half with the other gift. Rarely under favouring stars is the man born who combines the two. This is one of the most glaring imperfections of nature, and this it is which makes wealth gross and repulsive in imperial Rome or modern America. In my Utopia the State would every year select a man who had a genius for spending, but no money, and endow him with the sum necessary for the "magnificent life." It would thus have examples of spending as a fine art, and the money would be found by taxing those who abused their wealth.

Underneath these reflections Bagshot has written the names of half a dozen of his friends whom he thinks would be eligible for this Utopian endowment. These, however, I suppress.

CHAPTER V

Ideals and Rights

BAGSHOT was not often obscure, but he had a habit of packing a good deal into a few sentences. Thus I find him trying to condense the whole controversy about the "rights of man" into a note which he has written at the end of the late Professor Ritchie's book on "Natural Rights":

> When the speculative man talks about his "ideals," the practical man talks about his "rights." Rights are ideals in terms of action. Man first becomes formidable in action when he conceives his ideals as his rights.

I am familiar with that last sentence. He used to repeat it with some pride, and declare that it was *the* fundamental postulate of human progress. Indeed, I can hear him now enlarging on the theme of man setting out on his long journey with an idea of

human society as good and just, pursuing the vision till to the eye of faith it seemed a concrete reality, and then passionately claiming it as his right, his birthright. In the same book and on the same page is another note which treats the theme in a minor key:

> When men say that they have rights, they generally mean that they are suffering wrongs.

Bagshot was of equable temper in controversy, but I have known him grow hot and angry when some cynical young man fresh from the schools was heard to declare that human rights were a delusion. He told this youth with some acerbity that a knowledge of human nature was desirable in those who set up to be philosophers.

Zealots for Moderation

On the other hand, he was never weary of insisting on the distinction between the idealist and the fanatic. Extremist politicians, he held, were guilty of a gross confusion of thought when they denounced men of moderate opinions as necessarily opportunists or time-servers. A great many moder-

ate men, he used to say, were "visionaries with an acute sense of the difficulty of legislating for practical people." A great many others were genuine zealots for a moderate policy. Here is an entry of March, 1900:

> It is a mistake to suppose that people are only fanatical for extreme courses. A passion for moderation is one of the commonest of English characteristics. A bigoted attachment to the *via media* of the Anglican Church was the redeeming virtue of Charles I. If a martyr, he was a martyr for a compromise.

Maxims for War-time

He was clearly thinking much at this time about the South African war, which greatly depressed his spirits. It is not necessary to go back on his reflections at this period, but one or two notes about war and public opinion are worth reviving. This is dated 10th February, 1900:

> There is only one possible change of Government when a war is proceeding—a change from a less warlike to a more warlike Government, from Lord Aberdeen

to Lord Palmerston. The reverse process is impossible, unless the country desires or is compelled to make peace. The worse the present Government conduct the Boer war and the longer it lasts, the more likely are they to remain in office. And yet I imagine that they would greatly like to be relieved.

I don't know whether the country is more angry with the Boers, the pro-Boers, or the Government. Of the three I think I pity the Government most.

Soon after the taking of Pretoria, when the Peace Party were crying out to stop the war, comes this:

If you want to influence a country for peace in time of war, you should be known as a man of war in time of peace. Only Bismarck could have "stopped the war" after Königgrätz.

Beside these I may place two observations written a few weeks before his death, in March, 1906, at the time of the Akaba incident, when everyone was in favour of

coercing the Sultan if he refused to give way:

> There is no peace-at-any-price party. There are only various parties which disapprove of each other's wars.
>
> All the peace parties I have known have ardently desired to make war on the Sultan of Turkey. Perhaps they are right, but some of them seem to regard it as a humanitarian picnic on a large scale—which is almost certainly a mistake.

* * * * *

Pain and its Limits

Bagshot was a very kind-hearted man, and he thought much on the subject of pain. He comforted himself by believing that the evil of pain was, on the whole, a good deal exaggerated. I find this entry in January, 1899:

> Nothing cheers me more in the world than to observe how much more abiding is the memory of pleasure than of pain. I have been talking to-day in a hospital with men who, in the last few weeks, have suffered every hideous form of mutilation

and torture—the survivors of an accident which filled the public with horror. One and all assure me that they suffered nothing at the time, and nearly all seem to have forgotten what they suffered afterwards, or, at most, to recall it with a cheerful pride which has no element of pain in it. One or two of them are maimed for life, and therefore greatly to be pitied, but the pain for which we chiefly pitied them is apparently the least part of their misfortune.

The thought of pain as something capable of illimitable increase in proportion to the tortures inflicted is, happily, an illusion. Pain has its own limit—unconsciousness. Whoever has fainted from pain has reached his limit. He would suffer no more if he were burnt at the stake. It is an illusion, also, to suppose that the pains which are horrible to describe are necessarily worse than the commonplace pains we suffer without sympathy. We should never think lightly of pain, but we need not torture ourselves by supposing that the wounded on a battlefield or the victims of an accident

suffer an indefinite multiplication of the pains we are familiar with.[1]

A wise man will suffer almost any degree of physical pain in preference to mental anguish. It is one of the qualities of physical pain that it kills thought. The ascetic who flagellates himself does really cure his spiritual agony.

Some personal experiences

Dr. N. (he writes a little later), came yesterday and made a large incision in my neck, and afterwards inserted an india-rubber tube in the hole. I declined chloroform because, when a similar operation was performed on me ten years ago, I suffered nothing. This time I analysed my sensations with some care. The sensation of being cut by a skilful surgeon would not, I think, be pain if one could keep one's imagination out of it. If it is quickly done, you feel nothing till it is over, and then what affects you is not a hurt but the idea of the sharp steel on your skin. That causes a shiver, with a sense of the teeth being set on edge, and, if you don't steady yourself, you go

[1] B. adds as a note to this passage: "I have shown this to a woman, and she disagrees with every word of it."

back and back on the sensation till you grow sick and faint. If I had not known what was happening, and let this prey on my imagination, I do not think I should have suffered anything from the wound.

A year later he was seriously ill of pneumonia, with various painful complications, and I find another note about his sensations a few weeks after his recovery :

I am told (he says) that my sufferings were horrible to witness, and the nurse dwells particularly on my struggles for breath. Of those I was completely unconscious, and I am not aware of having even suffered discomfort in breathing. Other things were temporarily painful, but the memory of them has so far faded from my mind that it is scarcely to be weighed against the recollection of one sunny hour. The idea of pain is constantly before us because a few people out of a vast number are always suffering accidents and diseases which are described in newspapers or talked about by their friends. This produces the illusion that pain is a constant factor in

everybody's life. It is, on the contrary, but a rare incident in the lives of the vast majority.

A little later there comes this characteristic sentence:

> Just as the journalist conceives of men and women as readers of newspapers, and the banker conceives of them as possessors of cheque-books, so the doctor conceives of them as "suffering humanity." Some doctors are not even content with this. They suppose most people to be suffering from the particular disease in which they happen to be specialists. My friend Sir T. D., the eminent specialist in rheumatism, told me the other day that "rheumatoid arthritis" was "the scourge of the human race." It is probable that not one in a thousand suffers from that rare disease, and if there were no specialists in appendicitis it is probable that that affliction would be as rare as it was before its discovery. It is a solemn fact that the discovery of a new disease immediately creates a demand for it.

The expression of "suffering humanity" (he goes on), is a gross piece of sentimentalism if it is taken to imply that humanity in the mass is generally suffering. At any given moment the vast majority are not suffering.

Modern Surgery

Nevertheless, Bagshot had a great respect for doctors, and he was always advising young men to enter "the most disinterested of the professions." But he has occasional flings at modern surgery:

> One of the most audacious scientific *non-sequiturs* is the assertion of the surgeons that the appendix has no function in the human body, because *they* are unable to discover it. Its function will probably now be discovered by the "method of difference."

The logical reader will have no difficulty in divining the meaning of the last sentence. I hope, for the sake of those who have undergone the operation, that the forecast is untrue.

I am glad to be able to add that Bagshot

was not always quite so stoical himself as some of these passages might suggest. On a certain day in 1900 I find this entry:

> I have never before been conscious of my own shape, but this morning I woke up with the sense of being *outlined* with a running thread of rheumatism. It is a horribly long way round.

With the exception of the passages quoted in this chapter, I can find no allusion to his health in any of Bagshot's diaries.

CHAPTER VI

A talk about Money

LET me for a moment suspend my selection from Bagshot's note-books to recall a talk which has stamped itself on my memory as revealing more of my friend than he generally let us see. We were three in number—B., myself, and a friend of his and mine, whom I will call Slackford, an eminent official well known in the public service for his extreme competence and affected cynicism. It was a June evening, and we had gone down to dine with Bagshot at his house in the country, and were sitting in the garden after dinner, smoking his excellent cigars. For a time everything was placid, then something or other set Slackford going about the iniquities of the working man, whom he declared to be idle and greedy. B. became Socratic, and induced him, in particular, to denounce a certain set of workmen to whom,

he said, a Government Department had just made a base surrender. B. then observed that the case had come before him, and he had discovered that the men in question had earned, on the average, rather less than 4*s.* for a day of nine hours. Slackford blustered and declared it was quite as much as they were worth, whereupon Bagshot made a rough calculation of Slackford's wage, which worked out at about £6 for a day of seven hours. Granting a whole world of difference between Slackford's value to the public and the value of the aforesaid labourers, was a man "greedy and idle," who wanted a very little more than a thirtieth part of what Slackford received (and what he was known to complain of bitterly as a most inadequate salary)?

The Needy and the Greedy

Slackford said with some justice that this *argumentum ad hominem* put him in a false position, and immediately changed his tack to a sweeping assertion that we were all equally greedy together in these days, and that there really was nothing worth having in life except money and the things that money bought. Small blame to them, then, if they

tried to get more, and small blame to us if we tried to prevent them from getting more. Slackford then launched out against the "cant" which was talked by preachers and writers about money being an evil, when everybody knew that nobody believed it, and all the world spent the whole of its time in seeking to get money and keep it. "Everyone," said Slackford comprehensively, "was either greedy or needy; those who weren't greedy were needy, and those who weren't needy were greedy. Most of us were both greedy and needy."

A "foolish kind of Paradox"

Bagshot was not to be drawn, and at first he returned a chaffing answer. But Slackford persisted, and was presently denouncing Radicals and Socialists, first for their dishonesty and then for their foolish ignorance of human nature. Then Bagshot's patience broke, and he marched to the attack. His exact words I cannot, of course, remember at this distance of time, but the general tenor of the conversation is vividly in my mind. "If," he said, "I had to make the choice—which, mercifully, I have not—I would far rather live in a country in which Socialism was a failure

than in a country in which materialism was a success. To say that money is the only thing that counts in this world is not only not true, but a particularly foolish kind of paradox." "A dull platitude, on the contrary," growled Slackford. "Let's test it, then," said B. "By all means," replied the other. "Well, then, is there any man who, standing by the death-bed of a wife he loved, would hesitate for one moment to take all he had and throw it into the sea, if by so doing he could bring her back?" "You put it too high," said Slackford. "But you said the 'greatest thing in the world,'" was the retort. "Take another case, if you will. Did the rich young men who went to South Africa show the white feather in order to be sure of going home and enjoying their wealth? Notoriously not. Or would you, the cynic, commit one paltry crime in order to save the whole of your miserable salary?" One after another came a torrent of typical cases, till Slackford was protesting that he had been misunderstood, while Bagshot, breathless but triumphing, was declaiming upon the blessed inaccessibility to the money motive of all that

really mattered in life. He got himself finally to the point of saying that the very importance, *on their own plane*, of the things that money could buy makes the refusal of average decent people to get money at the cost of self-respect a more shining virtue. Slackford found courage to say that a vast number of people had no such scruple, but Bagshot, insisted that his "average decent people" were an immense majority,

A Utopian Form of Will.

Since Slackford still muttered, Bagshot took another illustration. "In my Utopia," he said, "I would so order Nature that people, in bequeathing their property, should be able to bequeath also their characters, dispositions, and personal appearance, let us say —to make it easy—at the best time of their lives. I would make it a condition that the legatee should not be allowed to accept the one without at the same time accepting the other, and that, in default of this acceptance, the property should revert to the State." "Now," he said, addressing himself to Slackford, "supposing X"—naming a notorious millionaire—"left you the whole of his millions on condition that you took his cruel

chin and snub nose and rascally disposition and predisposition to gout, would you accept them?" "I'm d——d if I would," was the emphatic reply; "which means," pursued Bagshot quietly, "that you would not for all his money change places with him. But let us take a less acute case not involving present company. Would my charming niece Molly, who is sadly impecunious, and greatly desires to marry a most deserving but wholly unendowed young officer, take her Aunt Sarah's thousand a year if she had also to assume Sarah's honoured countenance and evangelical disposition? We will take dear Sarah at her best—say, aged thirty. I have a photograph of her over there, and you can judge for yourselves." Swiftly we judged, and declared that Molly would go penniless all her days, scrub floors, sweep crossings, and die at the last in a workhouse rather than take up that forbidding heritage. Bagshot pursued the theme with a wealth of illustration. Was there any painter, poet, musician, or man of letters worth his salt who would exchange his talents for the endowed Philistinism of Mr. T.? The initial concealed an extremely

undesirable personality, and Slackford and I exclaimed together that the offer would scarcely tempt even a starving journalist. "Right, of course," said Bagshot; "and now perhaps Slackford begins to see what I am driving at. In my Utopia the State grows enormously rich from repudiated estates, and all social problems are solved without taxing anybody, simply because, when it comes to the point, almost everybody is quite convinced that no money can possibly compensate them for the loss of beauty, health, happiness, good temper, and other things that really count." I have never seen Bagshot happier than when he had wrung the admission of this edifying platitude out of the cynic Slackford. Slackford, in fact, gave it up. "It must," he remarked, "be extremely mortifying for the ghosts of those Utopian aunts and uncles to watch the effect of their dispositions, if that is permitted in the place to which they go." "It is, of course, permitted," said Bagshot; "and it makes an excellent beginning of purgatory."

* * * * *

A few Maxims

I find certain observations in the last note-

book which, I think, belong to the same time as this conversation.

Cynicism as often as not is a kind of collective modesty. There are people who think it as immodest to claim virtue for humanity as to claim it for themselves. This is what religious people call the sense of sin.

To call themselves "miserable sinners" is with many people a kind of religious good manners, just as a man inscribes himself "your humble servant."

In the idealist the sense of sin passes into a passion for perfection. Instead of "I am unworthy," he says, "this is unworthy of me."

Not a few clever men resemble those plants which so impoverish the soil that no other plants can live near them. Arthur H—— has great talent himself, but he kills talent in others.

There are a great many people who would do excellently in the world if they could from the beginning be marked *hors concours*. They have a sense of perfection

which is blunted and marred by competition.

The fear of being beaten is the most insidious form of moral cowardice. A great many men will challenge their superiors, but never face their equals. That is to save their pride in case of defeat. For the same reason the first-rate man actually prefers to be handicapped when competing with his inferiors.

The non-Royal are said to be all one to the King. For the same reason the gifted and the ungifted seem alike to the man of genius. Hence the common complaint of the merely talented that the great choose inferior men for their friends.

In literature the very good and the very bad may alike be popular, but talent appeals only to the cultivated.

Many excellent men fail because they confuse the parts of conductor and first fiddle.

Many minds are like low-grade ores. There is gold in them, but it takes a vast deal of labour to get it out.

CHAPTER VII

What happens "when we aren't there"

TO judge from the note-book before me, Bagshot was in a contemplative mood on the night of 3rd September, 1903. I wonder (he writes) whether other people are oppressed, as I am, by a sense of the things which "happen when we are not there." There are moments when our consciousness is strained to the utmost in the effort to comprehend what we cannot see. To-night there is a full south-west gale, and the wind howls about my windows and chimneys. I think of vast heaving masses of water in mid-Atlantic under the moon—stupendous activities with no eye-witness. Metaphysicians tell me that the thought is meaningless—that there is no form or colour without an eye to see, no noise of wind or wave without an ear to hear. What, then, is there when I am not there? Potentiality, says the metaphysician, a kind of ghost of what might be

there, if I were there. No matter; I cannot help thinking of it as related to me, and I try to realize all that is going on everywhere —crashing of ice at the Poles; tropical forests under blazing sun in mid-Africa; beasts of prey and their violent life in the jungle; swarming cities of Orientals in China and India; solitary men on ranch and prairie; crowds in the markets and Stock Exchanges; armies of labouring men building, digging, ploughing, mining; Parliaments, churches, theatres, law-courts; endless forms of life and death, at all hours of day and night simultaneously. The brain whirls with it, and for all my struggles I cannot rid myself of the conviction that it is midnight everywhere, and that the whole world sits listening, as I do, to the sound of the wind without.

We talk glibly of "realizing things," but, as a matter of fact, we realize hardly anything. It is an infinitesimal fragment of the whole that is contained in our consciousness. The rest is a confused mist round a point of light, and the effort to enlarge the field of vision throws the whole of it out of

focus. It is not the shortness of life that oppresses me so much as this intense limitation of the life of thought. I yearn not to live longer, but to live more—to realize more fully.

In thinking of the Deity, omnipotence is nothing, omniscience everything. The modern conception of the universe substitutes law for power, and forbids us to think of power apart from law. But the omni-consciousness of God is an overwhelming thought to those who realize the intense poverty of the human consciousness.

* * * * *

The Diffusion of Consciousness

"The fool hath his eyes on the ends of the earth." But so has the modern man with the modern newspaper. What subtle effect, I wonder, has this daily diffusion of consciousness through cable and telegraph upon the mind of the race? This incessant hitching-on and hitching-off leads to a kind of intellectual short-windedness. The thinking capacity of man remains constant, so far as one can discover, while the demands upon it multiply indefinitely. His mind is daily

divided between a hundred imperfect images, none of which can be even approximately realized. Mental culture reverses the process of agriculture, and passes from the intensive to the extensive, going to seed over a wider and wider area, regardless of the fertility or infertility of the soil. Hence the sharp, shallow, inconsecutive modern intelligence, which prefers the article to the book, the paragraph to the article, and, eventually, the headline to the paragraph.

The passion for fact is killing thought in the rising generation. There is a conflict not only between science and religion, but between science and thought. Nothing is so fatal to thought as a little science—the popular science which teaches the "how" and the "what" of things, and never the "why."

* * * * *

Thought and Fact

I may, perhaps, add to this a note which Bagshot wrote at a later date, at the end of a scientific book on the origin of life:

Nearly all the scientific books about the origin of life fail even to state the problem

coherently. We do not need to make philosophers kings, and still less kings philosophers. The great need for the advancement of knowledge is that the men of science should study philosophy, and the men of philosophy study science. The chasm between the two must be bridged if either are to make progress. The idea fostered by the universities, that philosophy is an accomplishment for the students of "humane letters" leaves science without a foundation.

To Bacon, writing for his time, it seemed a fundamental necessity to bring the world back from the fantastic speculations of schoolmen and alchemists to the solid region of fact. For us, on the contrary, the chief necessity is to make the thought equal to the fact. Though Bacon condemned it, I can never read without a thrill his description of the "inveniendi modum simplicem et inartificiosum qui hominibus maxime est familiaris"—the simple and unartificial method of inquiry which is most familiar to mankind. "Hic autem non alius est, quam ut is, qui se ad

inveniendum aliquid comparat et accingit, primo quae ab aliis circa illa dicta sint inquirat et evolvat; deinde propriam meditationem addat, atque per mentis multam agitationem spiritum suum proprium sollicitet et quasi invocet ut sibi oracula pandat."[1] This image of man "invoking his own spirit to open its oracles to him" is surely one of the most beautiful in all literature, and I know of no words which express so much of the toil and turmoil of the thinking mind. The excessively external life which we lead in these times leaves us without leisure to invoke the inner oracle.

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About Persons

Let me pass from this to some more of the observations about persons which are so plentifully scattered throughout the notebooks:

[1] Bacon, "Novum Organum," lib. i, 82. This is the method whereby, when a man applies himself and braces his faculties to an investigation of anything, he first asks and ascertains what has been said about the subject by others; then adds his own meditation, and with much mental turmoil appeals to his own spirit and invokes it to open its oracles to him.

Some persons have the good fortune to combine dissimilar virtues, but still more have the misfortune to possess defects which, one would suppose, could not exist together.

S., for instance, is both dull and violent, and the conversation of Y. is at once boring and improper.

William (a cousin of his) has a genius for the indirect. The front door may be wide open, but he will fetch a ladder and force an entrance by the first-floor window even though he has to cut out the glass in doing it.

[Another entry, a year later, about the same man may be compared with this:

William is in chronic rebellion against other people's experience. He is like one of those climbers who will go up a mountain the wrong way, simply because other people have gone up the right way before him.]

B.'s distrust of logic leads him not to refrain from syllogizing, which would be rational, but to put a negative into the conclusion—which is absurd.

Denys has a nature warmed from within on which the snow will not lie.

Lewis's life is an incessant tobogganing, which means that he spends two-thirds of his time in getting his bob-sled up-hill.

S. has the misfortune to be out of scale with his surroundings. He has too much talent for the circle in which he moves and not enough to be at home in the circle of the really talented. M., again, is always shocking the pious people with whom she lives, but is ineffably shocked when she finds herself in the company of the real worldlings.

H. asked Dr. F. what would reduce his corpulence. "Three months' hard worry," was the reply. H. is conscientiously seeking a subject to worry about, but has completely failed thus far. A course of H., however, is extremely thinning to his friends.

A "Platitude usually forgotten"

After a series of these observations Bagshot seems to have been struck with remorse, for he adds a "platitude usually forgotten":

The most difficult thing in the world to

realize is that other people talk about us with exactly the same freedom that we talk about them. We are so encased in self-flattery that there is scarcely one of us who is not genuinely surprised and indignant if accidentally on one occasion we discover this to be true. Let us assure ourselves that this is *habitually* our fate at the hands of our best friends, and, before we take offence, let us ask ourselves whether they have not exactly the same ground of offence against us.

The idea that you must say nothing behind a man's back which you would not say to his face is absurd. A great many things which are quite inoffensive when said behind one's back would be grossly impertinent if said to one's face. I am quite entitled to say to my friends that I don't admire Mrs. Hawksbee's type of beauty, but I should be grossly impertinent if I said it to her face. If I am a journalist I may without offence write things about Mr. Balfour and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman which I could not without gross rudeness say in their presence. Our friends

are to us, and we are to our friends, what the newspapers are to the public man. Society would be indescribably artificial and insipid without the liberty of fair comment on matters of personal importance. Let us cheerfully yield ourselves as a topic of conversation to our friends, if they are kind enough to think us interesting; but let us have no mercy on the mischief-makers who turn the innocent into the malicious by the act of repeating it.

A division of Gifts.

Bagshot's sister insisted on taking him to a ball one night in 1894, when his niece Molly, came out. According to an entry in his diary, he was not in bed till four the next morning. I am sure he made himself very agreeable, but he celebrates the occasion with this comment:

> "The gods," says Hesiod, "have bestowed fortitude on some men, and on others a disposition for dancing." I was sorely in need of both qualities last night.

CHAPTER VIII

Man the Parasite and Man the Monarch

I HAVE been reading (writes Bagshot in his diary of 10th March, 1906) several books and articles this week on man's place in the universe. One—a book on astronomy—suggests that the meanest pebble on the seashore may be a whole universe in itself, with a multitude of planetary systems in its interior, all whirling about their solar centres and reproducing the pageant of night and morning and summer and winter on millions of atom-planets, divided from each other and their suns and other stars by spaces relatively as great as those which divide the heavenly bodies in our universe. All this the writer deduces from the supposition that matter is "discrete" and subject to radio-activity. And then he goes on to suggest that there may be an Intelligence to which our universe is but a pebble on the shore of the infinite and our globe but one among a million million

atoms whirling round their radio-active centres within the pebble. This is a humbling thought, and it reduces us from our comparatively respectable place as inhabitants of one of the meaner planets to that of inconceivably microscopic parasites on the surface of an atom.

From this I turned to an article by Dr. A. R. Wallace in the "Fortnightly Review," and I learnt that the universe is one and limited, that our solar system is the centre of it, that our earth holds the primacy of the solar system, that alone of all stars and planets it is inhabited, and that man holding the lordship of its inhabitants is, therefore, the crown and climax of creation.

These, apparently, are the two voices of science about man at this moment. Which of them am I to choose?

In my perplexity I turn to a metaphysician, and he tells me that whether I am the parasite on the atom, or the crown and centre of the universe, is, from his point of view, not of the slightest importance, and that both the astronomer and Dr. Wallace are fussing themselves about nothing. Mind, says the

metaphysician, is the only reality, and mind is not to be weighed in any of these material scales. So far as I partake of mind, I create the universe and possess it, which is much better than being a microscopic atom, as on any other supposition I must be, whether at the centre, the circumference, or drifting about in between. This puffs me up, and I feel like Heine when he fed on the fixed stars and drank up the milky way.

Many views of the Great Adventure

After this course of reading I went last Sunday to church and sat under an eminent preacher, who took all these hypotheses and hurled them at me one after another, without, apparently, the slightest sense of their incongruity. I was a speck in infinity, a worm and no man, a miserable sinner, yet the centre of creation, the constant object of Divine solicitude, the being for whose salvation everything was ordained before the foundations of the world were laid. The preacher was apparently as convinced that the earth was the Lord's chosen planet as the Jews were that Palestine was His chosen country, and to that extent he agreed with Dr. Wallace, but he would grant me no pride in my

position on the elect world, but insisted repeatedly on my unworthiness to occupy this place, and the pain and sorrow which I caused to a Creator who, he seemed to say, had been grievously disappointed by the result of His own act in placing me there. So though I held my central position I had no right to it, and for some inscrutable reason had been promoted to a place in nature for which I was equally unsuited and unworthy.

The curious thing is that I seriously believe all these things in turn. I feel myself of no importance and of all importance, an outcast and an angel, the master of circumstances and the sport of circumstances, the most perishable of things and the most enduring of things—each of these things in turn, on different days of the week, and different hours of the same day. There are days when, so far from lacking faith, all the terrestrial faiths put together seem to make too little demand on my capacity for believing, and there are days when I seem to be equally without past or future or anchorage to the present.

I have questioned all sorts of religious people, and I gather that their emotions are essentially the same as mine, though they use phrases about them which do not come easily to my lips. And this is good for them and for me. Any religion would be a calamity which quenched this sense of the great human adventure in the unknown. There is no certainty which could be other than dull, hard, and materialistic, compared with the infinite hopes and possibilities of this spiritual quest. Ὁ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ, and I will not for any theory, theological or scientific, resign my rights in the inquiry.

* * * * *

On Life in general

Let me pass from this philosophizing to some of Bagshot's lighter comments on life in general. Here is a note about snobbery:

> Snobbery is imperfectly defined as "meanly admiring mean things." It is just as often a quite respectable form of egoism—a desire to show in what esteem you are held by people of esteem. The disappointed and those who are insecure

of their position are quite as prone to it as the vulgar.

It is no sin to cultivate the society of your betters. The important thing is whom you consider to be your betters.

Boastfulness, like snobbery, is a vice of the unsuccessful. The boaster speaks for himself because he cannot trust other people to speak for him.

Let me give next an observation about diplomacy which I have often heard from his own lips:

A diplomatist should never seek to be thought diplomatic. Here, if anywhere, *ars est celare artem.* A really discreet man avoids the appearance of discretion.

To speak freely what you may speak and to be silent about what you may not speak is the way to be trusted. A fool blabs the forbidden, and makes a mystery of the permissible.

Here is another note on a kindred subject, which may properly be given here:

In proportion as society has gained free-

dom of speech in law and theory, it has curtailed its freedom in life and practice. We greatly need some modern substitute for the fool at the Court or the slave in the chariot—privileged truth-tellers, who will say to the great what, with all our liberty of speech, none of us dare say, for fear of shocking propriety or encountering the law of libel. A public scavenger, enjoying immunity from prosecution, would serve a purpose in the modern world.

In the year 1884 one of his relatives asked Bagshot to be godfather to her child. There followed quite a long and acrimonious correspondence about the child's name, which he so much disliked that he actually would not appear at the church, and the ceremony had to go forward with a proxy in his place. This entry—about the same date—must, I think, refer to that incident:

Silly name makes silly child. Parents should consider the effect which a foolish name will have upon the child's character and other people's opinion about the child. Every child should have the right of

changing its name when it comes to years of discretion. Many children, I fancy, would exercise this right.

* * * * *

A deeply disgraceful Dream

Dreams are generally rather a bore, but an entry of Bagshot's, on 20th March, 1903, is, I think, sufficiently out of the common to justify me in reproducing it here:

There must, I think (he writes), be some mocking spirit imprisoned in all of us which escapes in our dreams and rejoices to place us in ridiculous and humiliating positions. How else explain the extraordinary puckishness of many of our dreams? There is one dream which has visited me twice or three times, and which is to me what the no-clothes dream is to other people. I find myself standing on the platform of a large lecture-hall, something like the Royal Institution, with a distinguished company to support me on the platform, and a crowded audience of the most intellectual in front of me. Then I become conscious that all these people are awaiting a lecture from

me on a Spanish poet of the eighteenth century. I have no manuscript and no notes; I have made no preparation; and I know nothing about the poet—not even his name. There is breathless silence, and I am expected to begin. I strain my eyes to the far end of the hall, where hangs a bill announcing the subject of my lecture, and with a tremendous effort I just manage to read the name of the poet. The situation is horrible; for though I have read the name I don't know how to pronounce it, and I have never before heard of the man. My tongue sticks to my throat, and I break out into a clammy perspiration but the audience beams and looks expectant.

And then a sad and deeply disgraceful thing happens. How do I act? I should like my friends to answer the question by saying, "Of course he made a clean breast of it, and begged pardon of the audience and swallowed the mortification like a man." The unhappy truth—or at least the dream-truth—is that I suddenly recovered my composure, and, casting shame and scruple to the winds, proceeded to invent

the poet from his cradle onwards. I gave him a birth-place, supplied him with anecdotes and incidents for his childhood and youth, enlarged upon his style and themes —all the time refreshing my memory about his name by furtive glances at the poster at the back of the hall—and finally brought the thing to a climax by reciting my own translations of his imaginary poems, and brought the house down with such applause that I woke up with a start. Then, for ten minutes, I lay panting with the effort, but secretly consoling myself that the mocking spirit had turned the joke against the audience. On calm reflection, however, I am wondering whether the incident does not reveal something dark and unscrupulous in my sub-conscious self, which will one day come to the surface and involve me in a scandal. Is it a common experience, I wonder, with others as with me, to lose all moral sense in their dreams? If so, what does it mean?

CHAPTER IX

A Bachelor on Women

BAGSHOT, like all bachelors, loved to moralize about women, and, on the principle that the outsider sees most of the game, he claimed that the unmarried have the best right to be heard on this subject. His observations, however, though numerous, are, as usual, scattered and inconsecutive; and if I attempt to gather them up into one chapter, I must put in the reminder that they were not so written, and that Bagshot himself would have been the last to claim that they were a new or methodical treatment of this ancient theme.

In no respect (he writes in March, 1890) has man taken greater advantage of his position than in labelling as feminine a large number of the less attractive weaknesses which are common to humanity and

both sexes. In apportioning these weaknesses man selects for himself what he imagines to be the defects of his qualities and gives the rest to women.

I like this stanza of Lafontaine:

> Rien ne pèse tant qu'un secret:
> Le porter loin est difficile aux dames;
> Et je sais même sur ce fait
> Bon nombre d'hommes qui sont femmes.

The sexes are much more alike in fundamentals than is generally acknowledged, and when we say that this or that quality is feminine we have always to add that there are *bon nombre d'hommes qui sont femmes.*

Woman's Advantage

The great advantage which women have in the world is that most women understand men a vast deal better than any man understands women. Since knowledge is power, woman has a control over man which man never has over her. To man she is always, in the last resort, untamable and unintelligible, whereas to her man is a simple, if massive, creature, whose subtleties, when occasionally he is subtle, are

much more intelligible to her than to other men. There is no complexity of the male character which the woman does not understand, and there is scarcely any complication of the feminine character which the man can really unravel. This accounts for the good humour with which the vast majority of women accept the crude mechanical power which man exercises by his laws and political devices.

A change of parts

But, unfortunately for both parties, there are women with men's minds and men with women's minds, and you never can tell from the appearance of either when this inner discord is at work. I have known delicate fair feminine women with a masculine mind within, and I have known robust brawny masculine men with the mind of a woman within. The woman with the man's mind must be perpetually in revolt, whereas the man with the woman's mind enjoys the privileges of both sexes. The first finds the woman's place an odious subserviency from which there is no escape; the second has the advantage of the male ascendency, and, if he does not choose to use it, he may

flatter himself that he is exercising a merciful forbearance.

* * * * *

Woman's Thrift

There is an Italian proverb which says that woman is to money as the sun is to ice. According to my observation, a woman is more naturally disposed to thrift than a man, whenever she is answerable to others for her expenditure. Women who are reckless in spending their own money are scrupulously frugal in spending their husband's money. Give a woman the sense of responsibility, and she is more conscientious than any man.

A woman will spend half the morning in saving fourpence on her household bills and then make up time by taking a half-crown cab to keep an appointment. Whereat the man laughs consumedly.

This, however, is exactly what man does himself.

The man who worries an office t osave a pound in business will spend ten pounds without a thought on a dinner at the Savoy. Business is business, says the man;

the weekly bills are the weekly bills, says the woman. It is the same habit in both. I know a woman who telegraphed to her husband to buy threepennyworth of cream on his way home from business to save her books from exceeding £6 a week. *He* paid for the cream and the telegram. It was an admirable instinct on her part. Similarly, I have known a Government Department spend £5 of another Department's money to save twopence of its own.

* * * * *

Her Morality

Woman's morality (writes Bagshot a few months later) is not inferior or superior to man's morality so much as different from it. Women are much more truthful than men when they are convinced of the importance of truth, just as they are much more uncompromising than men when they are convinced of the importance of an ideal. When they are not convinced they have little or none of the everyday morality which carries men through the ordinary affairs of life, though they may conform to it from fear of the consequences.

Nearly all white lies are the inventions of women, and nearly all great falsities the inventions of men. Men say that women have no sense of honour, which is true in the sense that they do not conceive themselves as bound by obligations to those who are not in intimate relations with them. With them loyalty to persons always takes precedence of loyalty to institutions or to the public interest. A woman is hardly ever convinced if you tell her that the public interest prevents you from perpetrating a job for the benefit of her husband or son. She is sure that you nourish a secret spite against them.

* * * * *

Her Logic

A woman's conclusions are often the same as a man's conclusions, but her reasons are nearly always different from a man's reasons; hence the extreme difficulty of arguments between women and men. A woman is not content that you should agree with her conclusions; she requires your assent to her reasons as well.

The demand of women for political in-

fluence is difficult to concede, not because women are unfit for political influence, nor because they are inferior to men; but because the mind of man and the mind of woman run on parallel lines which cannot be made to meet. All good polities presume a unity in difference among those who are entrusted with power.

In my Utopia there is a man's legislature and a woman's legislature, and there are many important branches of legislation in which the man's legislature is obliged to defer to the woman's. This is found to work excellently.

* * * * *

All the world is agreed about a pretty face, but there is always a minority against a beautiful face.

* * * * *

The "restless Analyst"

Women are indefatigable in their analysis of conduct. A man accepts a white ray of light for what it is; a woman passes it through a prism and resolves it into its component rays. If I pass Mrs. A. in the street without saluting her, she conjectures

a dozen painful motives to account for my absent-mindedness. If she passes me, I conclude that she is shortsighted or absent-minded.

Women see through a brick wall to what isn't on the other side. Nothing causes them so much misery as their habit of supplying complicated explanations and invidious motives to simple and innocent proceedings. I never meet my sister Alice but what she tells me that some friend of hers was inexplicably cold to her when they last met, and before I can tell her that she was probably mistaken about this, her "unerring instinct," as she calls it, has woven together a dozen meaningless trifles into a consecutive and plausible but highly improbable story of her friend's motives and intentions.

A good and loyal woman will resent a slight upon her husband long after he has forgotten and forgiven it. I am very good friends with S., whom I once thought it necessary to criticise in an official report; but his wife will never again ask me to her house, and she thinks that her husband has

shown a mean and compromising spirit in forgiving me so easily.

The maxim of Pericles that you should treat your enemies as though they might again become your friends seems mean and craven to most women. *Never enlist a woman's sympathy with you in a quarrel with another person unless you are quite sure that you will never make it up*, for, if you do, you will fall heavily in her esteem.

When their feelings are really engaged, women are much less worldly minded than men. Opportunism and compromise on the things that they really care about are unpardonable offences in their eyes. Most of the great sacrifices for principle are inspired by women.

* * * * *

The Secret in the Commonplace

If I say to my niece Molly that two and two make four she consents, but is unconvinced. But if I show her this little formula:

$$1\tfrac{1}{2}+\tfrac{1}{2}+1\tfrac{3}{4}+\tfrac{1}{4}=4,$$

she is at once all alive with interest, and

sits down to work it out, and proclaims in triumph that it is so. From a hard and dull statement of fact it has become a problem and an intrigue, and here she is in her element.

That is the way of womenkind in all relations of life.

The obvious bores them and at the bottom of their hearts they do not believe in it, though a long habit of conforming to male conventions requires them to consent for the avoidance of friction. Nearly all women are convinced in their hearts that things are other than they seem.

It is this sense of a secret lurking in the commonplace which renders them more liable than men to superstition.

Reason covers probably two-thirds of life. Most men imagine that it covers the whole of life; most women are convinced that it covers less than half of life. Women's mistrust of male logic is quite as well founded as men's mistrust of women's intuitions.

Genius arises when the imagination of the woman is added to the intellect of the

man. The *man* of genius is supreme over woman in the feminine qualities.

* * * * *

Talking to Lady C. the other night I quoted Kant's injunction to "act so that your action may be universal." She replied at once that the philosopher was a fool. Was there any woman, she wanted to know, who would not be insulted if a man behaved to her in "a universal manner"?

Women hate rules and love exceptions. There is no woman who does not believe herself an exception to a rule. Most men know that they are not, and wish that they were.

* * * * *

The limits of Bagshot's knowledge

There is much more in the same vein scattered up and down Bagshot's many note-books, but I have given enough to show his general state of mind—a state of mind which, as the reader will see, varied according to his moods, and may easily be convicted of inconsistency. Let me add just one note, written when he was thirty years of age, which shows a sad lucidity of soul:

One marries a girl and lives with a woman. I think I know something about girls, but I am sure I know nothing about women.

Bagshot never married.

CHAPTER X

Random Reflections

THIS is a chapter of random observations, gathered from three note-books, dated 1895, 1900, and 1903 respectively. The subjects are conduct, religion, and things in general. Here, to begin with, is a characteristic reflection on the life of the bee:

> It is curious that in moralizing about the bee, Maeterlinck should have omitted one feature which lends itself above all others to a parable. The bee builds her cell and gathers honey to fill it, but, all unconsciously, she is the agent of another service, bearing the pollen from flower to flower. So we, while we go about our own business, are unconsciously the ministers of others, fertilizing them if we are fortunate, blighting them if we are not. And this service of ours is effectual and happy, precisely in

proportion as we are unconscious of it. Virtue goes out of it when we become philanthropists, and carry the pollen with the air of benefactors.

A man knows what he does, but not what he is. It is because being is so much more than doing that the consciousness of doing is so much less than the innocence of being.

A page or two later comes this thought, suggested by a flower:

Whence does the flower draw its scent? I have had a narcissus bulb growing in a pot in my room. I have watched it send up its shoot and come into bud, and yet not till the moment when the bud opens and it breaks into flower have I ever discovered the faintest trace of the coming scent. Then in a second it comes from nowhere, and fills my room with its fragrance. A human being will suddenly perform this miracle for us like a flower.

As a note to this Bagshot has added a quotation from Thoreau: "I do not value chiefly a man's uprightness and benevolence, which

are, as it were, his stem and leaves. I want the flower and fruit of a man that some fragrance be wafted over from him to me and some ripeness flavour our intercourse."

Thrift and Laziness

I have often heard Bagshot say that the combination of thrift and laziness produced the most useless kind of man. Here is the same thought expressed the other way round:

> Just as it is necessary to create wants in the savage man before he can be induced to work regularly, so it is a necessity for many civilized men to live habitually beyond their incomes as a condition of using their powers. I constantly hear his relations lamenting R.'s extravagance; but for my part I rejoice at it, since R., with all his gifts, is precisely the kind of man who would be lazy if not extravagant.
>
> "Lazy and extravagant," are two epithets commonly combined, but when a poor man is extravagant he is generally also industrious.
>
> The principle of the counter-irritant is universal in life (he writes in November, 1900); and it is the function of the minor

anxieties to cure the greater. Hence it is that our lots are more equal than they seem. He who has most fears most, and the chief human malady is fear.

A few pages later he writes:

He who need not worry about his wealth will almost certainly worry about his health. Cast out the fear of poverty and you let in the fear of death.

Current Euphemisms

Now and again his customary optimism seems to have deserted him. Thus I read on 1st December, 1900:

The Greeks named the hemlock εὐφορβία, the good food. So we speak of "death the healer," "death the comforter," "death the good angel," in a pathetic effort to propitiate the power we dread. Our attitude towards pain and death is a constant euphemism—a kind of whistling in the dark.

That leads him on to sundry observations about the attitude of religious people towards pain, death, and evil. They are rather dis-

jointed, but I put them together as they are written:

Religion would gain greatly if the clergy would make a more sparing use of the blessing-in-disguise argument. No one really believes that pain, privation, and bereavement, are other than evil things. Not to believe this is to take the mainspring out of human action. It is rational to say that character may win good out of evil, but only a colossal egoist will be persuaded that the death or suffering of another is a dispensation of Providence for the welfare of his soul.

The problem of evil is not in the least helped by saying that good and evil are correlative terms, that evil is "less good," or that the idea of good is impossible without the idea of evil. That merely restates the question in a more perplexing form. Why should existence be so conditioned that good is impossible or unthinkable without evil?

The moral currency is debased by the Puritanism which calls good things evil, as

well as by the cynicism which calls evil things good. The child who is brought up to believe that the theatre is sinful will end by believing that debauchery is venial.

If the modern world abandons the religious idea of sin it will have to recover the Greek idea of virtue as a fine art. It is a pity that the two cannot be combined. The next nation which leads mankind to a higher level of conduct will be one which adds conscience to instinctive good taste.

The misfortune, meanwhile, is that the nations which excel in manners pay for it by disparaging morals.

* * * * *

A Providential Fact

In China lack of patriotism and corruption in government go hand in hand with the highest standard of honesty in private transactions. In Japan the highest standard of patriotism and public honour is maintained by individuals who are untrustworthy in private business. If the Chinese could learn the public virtues of the Japanese, and the Japanese the private virtues of the Chinese, the Yellow races would be irresistible.

Here is a hard saying, which Bagshot has underlined as if trying to impress it on himself:

> The just man bears most easily what he knows to be his own fault.

These, again, are characteristic:

> Mem. for humanitarians.—Sympathy like strength, must be harboured. He who pities the whole world will relieve no one.

> At what period of the world's history should one wish to live? Young ladies reply the age of Elizabeth or the age of Pericles. I rather think we have lived a thousand years too soon.

> Moderation, coolness, caution, are quite compatible with a highly nervous temperament. Some well-balanced minds are like "sleeping tops," which keep their equilibrium by being perpetually in motion.

> It is as important for a country to have great unrepresentative men as to have great representative men. Socrates, St. Francis, Dante, Wiclif, Giordano Bruno, Newman,

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were all unrepresentative men. The Founder of Christianity was, humanly speaking, the supreme unrepresentative man.

It is only the landlubber who makes a boast of the fact that he is never sick at sea. The *homo sanus ought* to be sick at sea if he is accustomed to live on dry land.

Despotic governments need not be afraid of education. In so far as they educate their subjects, they undermine their power of physical resistance; and, though agitation is increased, the chance of rebellion is diminished. What a despot has to fear is a few intellectuals let loose among a fighting people.

"He jests at scars that never felt a wound." It is true courage to come out of hospital and to go back into battle.

CHAPTER XI

Gambling—an Escape from the Rational

BAGSHOT appears to have visited Monte Carlo in the winter of the year 1902, and I find sundry observations in his note-books which may be traced to this visit. "Gambling and superstition," he writes, "go hand in hand, and both result from the inexpugnable human instinct to escape from the rational. In this place everything that is absurd is greedily believed. You acquire luck by touching a dwarf, by picking up a pin, by wearing charms, by not seeing the moon through glass, by seeing two magpies or three parrots. You are in a world where two and two have ceased to make four and may make a hundred or nothing. That is obviously the charm of it to men and women in revolt against the horrid routine of cause and effect. There is F.—temperate, frugal, business-like, and sternly rational for fifty weeks in the year, yet for the remaining fortnight

recklessly staking forty-pound notes on the spin of the roulette ball or the fall of the cards! It is his reaction against the deadly sanity of Lombard Street. All men are said to crave a nerve poison—alcohol, tobacco, or drugs—and nearly all men seem at one time or another to need a brain-poison—some narcotic of the reasoning faculty—which it is the function of this place to supply.

"Systems" and the Unsystematic

But then the reasoning faculty has a habit of reasserting itself while the narcotic is at work. If the gambler would only accept this irrational world on its own terms, little harm would come to him. But he must proceed to supply it with a logic which belongs to the sane world, and herein lies his disaster. F., who is in all other respects a rational man, seriously believes while he is in this place that one spin of the roulette ball influences another spin of the roulette ball, and one deal of the cards another deal of the cards. Both beliefs are manifestly absurd, and if he applied them to his banking business he would be ruined in a fortnight. Yet on these absurdities he builds what he calls a "system," and "invests" a thousand pounds. It is the

nature of the place to be system-proof. You cannot have a system of the unsystematic. Yet its supreme cunning lies in its constant invitation to you to apply reason to its absurdities, and in proportion as it succeeds it increases your losses and its own gains.

The gambler is vain and inordinately sanguine. If he wins, it is his own cleverness; if he loses, it is his "accursed luck." What he wins he spends, regardless of what he lost yesterday or what he may lose to-morrow. Above all things, never give moral advice to a gambler, for it is part of the perversity of this place that it will instantly rise up and defeat your best maxims. You tell him to come away; he defies you and stays, and at the next *coup* wins heavily. Or he comes away, and misses a *coup* that would have brought him fortune, and bears you an eternal grudge. There is no point in the game at which you can say that prudence will be rewarded or recklessness punished. Moralize, if you will, about gambling in general; but never stake your moral maxims on a particular *coup* (a good rule for life in general).

The last entry in this note-book will be understood by philosophers who have been to Monte Carlo:

The lights of the Casino shut out the stars.

* * * * *

The "Insincerity" of politicians

Let me pass to a few more of Bagshot's sayings on politics and public affairs. The root difficulty of politics was, in his view, to keep thought on a high plane, while submitting to the limitations in action which are a necessary condition of public life. What a politician dared do for forty millions of people must often be the second-best, but his thought, which was his own, should always be best. However, let Bagshot speak for himself:

> The suspicion of insincerity which clings to politics arises largely from the fact that politicians will not make confession of the conditions under which they work, and which, if openly confessed, are no shame to them. A politician need never apologize for opportunism in action, but he should always be ashamed of compromise in thought.

Politics progress most where men are moderate in their action and uncompromising in their ideals.

Thought which is individual should never be dragged down to the level of action, which is collective.

Where there are no extreme parties the average of opinion will be low.

The merit of the English two-party system is that it simplifies politics by squeezing a great variety of opinions into the same moulds; its weakness, that it tends to impose on thought the discipline which is necessary for action.

Freedom of thought means division of opinion. A party which is not divided in Opposition will seldom have ideas on which it is worth while to unite when in power.

It is often necessary to tolerate evil in public affairs, but it is always disastrous to pretend that it is good.

The extremist who refuses an instalment for fear it may prejudice his demand for the whole betrays a rooted mistrust of his own cause.

Homage to "imaginary fools"

The worst spectacle in politics is that of everybody doing what everybody disapproves, in the hope of pleasing somebody else who doesn't exist. This fictitious being is commonly called "the man in the street."

All the world is constantly engaged in doing homage to imaginary fools.

Civilization is in its infancy. Its entire history is comprised within 10,000 years. Astronomers tell us that the world will probably be habitable for at least fifteen million years. If so, man has not yet run the 1500th part of his career.

Patriotic Antipathies and International Pace-makers

Next come a few notes on International affairs:

If you hear a man described as anti-German, you may be certain, in nine cases out of ten, that three years ago he was anti-French. The fundamental thing is the anti-temperament. It is a pure accident what nation may at any given moment become the subject of a patriotic antipathy.

The truth is that every active nation needs a pace-maker, and when there is no rival at hand to fill the part, it instantly

invents one. France, Russia, Germany, and the United States, have each successively fulfilled this purpose to Great Britain in the last twelve years, and Great Britain herself regularly discharges the same duty to other nations. The function of the "anti's" is to discover the pace-maker. It is, therefore, idle to expect a state of international relations in which every nation will be on equally good terms with every other.

If there were no international rivalries it would be necessary to invent them, and the collective intelligence which constitutes national feeling will not for many generations to come reach the point at which the rival is distinguished from the enemy. That is still an exceptional effort of the individual mind.

The great difficulty of international relations is that they are still on the plane of natural selection and subject to the play of forces which are quite unmoral; whereas internal politics are (dimly) informed by morality. Man, however, is so invincibly moral in his reasoning processes that he is constantly under the necessity of explaining

The "Deceitfulness of Diplomacy"

his instinctive combativeness by motives, reasons, causes, pretexts, which are quite irrelevant to it. Hence the inevitable deceitfulness of diplomacy, which is for ever engaged in concealing the barbarian under a frock coat.

Hypocrisy is imperfectly defined as the homage which vice pays to virtue. It is also the prediction of a morality to come. Man rises to the height of his own hypocrisies. International morality will some day be what diplomacy pretends it to be.

In so far as the Liberal is justly suspected of indifference or hostility to Empire, it is because he is always trying to apply the moral law to the physical world. That is his special function, but it is often premature.

A government is always in a sad plight with a war to which it has reluctantly consented. By a confusion of thought it carries its reluctance on into the conduct of military operations, and compounds with its conscience by sparing the enemy. This is absurd. There is no middle course between keeping the peace and making war with all

your might. History abounds in instances of the disasters which follow from neglecting this elementary rule.

Here are a few observations taken at random from a diary for 1901:

Compensating Qualities

A disagreeable disposition is, in certain circumstances, a high testimonial of ability. My friend C., for instance, is of so disagreeable a disposition that no one can possibly have desired to retain his services, unless they were indispensable. I know nothing about him in his official capacity, but the unanimous aversion to him in all other capacities is proof positive that he is a most competent man.

There is an almost pathetically charitable inclination to assume that physical deficiencies must be compensated for by moral excellences. A plain woman starts with a presumption in favour of her goodness, which a beautiful woman will scarcely acquire by years of good conduct. The worst of it is that the presumption is mostly groundless.

The same idea applies more or less to

intellectual qualities. "Be good, sweet child, and let who will be clever." Herein Kingsley expresses the fundamental British idea that there is a hidden opposition between goodness and cleverness. Next to that of being a humorist, there is no reputation which a British public man had better avoid more carefully than that of being clever. There is room for genius and for solid worth, but the path of talent is a razor's edge.

I heard a certain man described the other day as "one who had never used a bad argument in a good cause." I don't know this man, but I hate him. *Tanto buon che val niente.*

CHAPTER XII

Social Inequalities

LET me put together in this chapter a few of Bagshot's reflections on social classes and social inequalities. Under date 10th January, 1886, I find a closely written note in his smallest handwriting on the fly-leaf of an American book entitled, "What Social Classes Owe to Each Other."

It is, of course, quite true (he writes) that men are not born equal, but they are not born unequal in the manner which those who remind us of the fact appear generally to assume. Natural inequalities form no basis for class distinctions as they are at present, though in an ideal society they might very well form the basis of a kind of life-peerage hierarchy. As things are, the established families are constantly engaged in protecting their unfit members from the competition of the fitter in other

classes, with the inevitable result that the sum-total of their capacity declines. If natural endowments are the test, the advantage tends more and more to be with the middle and artisan class. That fact would quickly be revealed if we really had the educational ladder from the elementary schools to the Universities. It is not intermarrying so much as the artificial protection of inferior types which threatens an aristocracy in modern times.

It is probably a dim instinct of what is for its own good that makes an aristocracy warlike, even in modern times. The aristocracy of feudal times was exposed to a rigorous process of natural selection on the battlefield, which kept it physically vigorous and mentally self-respecting. The aristocracy in these days has found no *rôle* in peace to take the place of the part which it formerly took in war. When it ceased to be a fighting class it was doomed as a governing class, and when it ceases to be a governing class it becomes plutocracy with a past. If the world is ever driven to Socialism, it will not be from any predatory

instinct, but from sheer inability to discover the *rôle* of the rich in the modern economy.

A few years later I find a series of short comments on the same theme:

An argument for *mésalliances*

I hear people constantly deploring the fertility of the poor, and the comparative infertility of the well-to-do. They assume that Society is being replenished from the "worst stock." Is there any foundation for this belief? The so-called "worst stock" provides admirable settlers for new countries. House them well, feed them well, educate them well, and they yield the same proportion of intelligent and influential characters. The ideal marriage is that of intellect and character, of culture and simplicity, and in my Utopia the Athenian would wed the Boeotian. The world would gain greatly by the intermarriage of the intellectual and the working classes. *A mésalliance is biologically good.*

* * * * *

Clear your mind of the superficial symp-

toms—dropping of aspirates, wearing of corduroy or broadcloth—and you will see an astonishing resemblance in the types of men. My gardener is an Academic man who never went to College; my secretary an agricultural labourer with a University education. My nephews (two notable athletes) are natural backwoodsmen with a thwarted instinct for physical toil which finds its vent in rowing and Rugby football. The great majority in all classes are by nature manual labourers, and the upper-class labourer is in chronic revolt against the circumstances which compel him to affect an interest in things intellectual.

* * * * *

Types of Men

I went yesterday through the men's wards of a great London hospital. Illness searches out and discriminates the types. Pass down this ward where thirty men lie in bed, shoulders and heads above the counterpane, showing features sharpened and refined by the wasting of sickness. They strike on you as abstractions of character, purged of dross and accident, "all that they might have been, all that they

could not be," the thwarted heart and core of them. There to the right of me, with splendid brow and profile and dreamy blue eyes, lies the speculative man, poet, philosopher, higher mathematician, mystic—take your choice—all these potentially, and fine gentleman above all, with such mild dignity of patience and courage in his clear glance that he is surely saint as well. I ask the nurse for his name and calling, and the answer comes short and sharp, "Smith, stevedore, of Bermondsey, recovering from operation for cancer." Two beds down lies Raphael's Pope Julian, beetle-browed, sunk-eyed, full-bearded, holding his head at precisely the characteristic angle, and with just the authoritative Pontifical air (Collins, grain-porter, East India Dock); and opposite him again a manifest Cardinal of the same period, full-jowled, square-chinned, worldly, ecclesiastical (Webb, potman, Rotherhithe). Next bed but two a distinguished man of the world, slightly cynical, and *rusé*, but with the perfect self-possession that comes of long mingling with good society (Sothern,

bookstall-clerk, District Railway); then an unmistakable prize-fighter, square-jawed, heavy-chested, with enormously developed muscles (Wilson, solicitor's copyist); and next to him an oppressively intellectual man, whose enormous forehead squeezes down on nose, mouth, and chin, and threatens to extinguish them (Rawson, casual labourer). There at length is a carpenter true to himself, but next to him again an unmistakable King's Counsel, who turns out to be a shop-walker; and in the last bed of all an inglorious Milton—shrivelled and reduced, but Milton still—who proves to be a picker-up of waste-paper. Here among a score of the poor and very poor were all the physical types which till now I had supposed to be the special marks of the refined and well-to-do and intellectually distinguished.

* * * * *

The opposite of Education

Following on this line of thought are sundry observations about education.

We sadly need a word (says Bagshot), which shall express the opposite of the

word "education," a word to denote that turning-in of the mind upon itself, closing of doors upon speculation, hardening of mental tissues, which is the special vice of the so-called educated. The cases in which learning kills culture and science extinguishes philosophy are around us everywhere. There is also a kind of education which expels nature and leaves a vacuum.

Three notes in the same vein may be inserted here:

Second-rate minds are apt to be confirmed in their inferiority by education. This is why a liberal education so often results in illiberal opinions.

The best mind feeds all day, like the flower, from sun and air. The inferior mind needs constant meals to keep it going.

A large number of scholars are men of science gone astray, and many editions of classical authors are but chemical analyses of their component parts, from which the

element of literature is excluded. It is for this reason, among others, that a classical education so often fails to impart a literary sense.

* * * * *

At the close of a German book on Education, which is heavily interlined with notes of dissent, I find a very singular outburst on Bagshot's part:

My heart (he writes) goes out to the unhappy German youths who have fallen under the yoke of this horrible pedant. It enrages me to think of him and a hundred like him let loose on a country to turn its schools and universities into gigantic tool-factories for the making of human implements. To-morrow I will start for Germany and tell this man to his face that education has no purpose but to make men philosophers. He will not understand my meaning, and he will laugh in my face, but happily there are some people in Germany who do understand, and by-and-by they will rise up and slay these pedants and save their country.

Side by side with this I may place these stray notes from a diary of the same year:

No Literature without speculation

There is no literature without speculation. When a subject can be exhausted it has ceased to be literature and become material for a Blue-book.

If science enlarges the bounds of knowledge, it also enormously expands our conception of the unknown. The modern positive and scientific world has a sense of mystery which was altogether lacking in the ancient and mediaeval world, and which is akin to the mysticism of the East. *The scientific age is that which has the measure of its own ignorance.*

What curious instinct is it which has led the Christian world to describe the "ages of faith" as the "dark ages"? Last Sunday I heard a preacher exhort his congregation to return to the Christianity of the "first six centuries," and within five minutes he was speaking of a large part of this period as the "dark ages."

The "dark ages" were apparently more convinced than any of the completeness of their illumination.

* * * * *

The Mortifications of Bagshot

Let me wind up this section with a more personal record. Bagshot appears to have been seriously annoyed on 26th October, 1900. The cause of the trouble is unknown to me, but his diary contains this entry:

I am told that the junior clerks in my department regard me as a demigod, raised high above law and discipline. Yet this morning I received a letter from my political chief which makes me feel like a fifth-form boy under the lash of a school-master. My chief, I gather, has received a letter from the Prime Minister which makes him feel like an usher who has been reprimanded by a Head master; and the Prime Minister probably has received a letter from the Sovereign which makes him feel like a footman who has been scolded by his mistress. Now I shall go home and scold my cook, who will quite certainly scold the kitchen-maid. Such is the link which binds the

highest and humblest; but the kitchen-maid, I hope, will feel less mortified than I do.

To be where no one has the right to blame is the vain hope of middle-aged vanity. My colleague, Pulsford, left the public service to gain this freedom, and then married a widow with two daughters, whose censure is regular and oral.

I read in the Life of Archbishop Benson that he never could face the governors of the school of which he was Head master without an inward conviction that he was going to be summarily dismissed. That is a touch of nature which has given me much comfort. The prospect of an interview with my official superiors always fills me with the same unfounded sense of calamity to come.

The entry winds up with an injunction which I have often heard from his own lips, and which I have known him describe as "one of the three golden rules of worldly wisdom":

"*Never display a wound—except to a physician.*"

CHAPTER XIII

Worldly Wisdom—the golden rules

IN my last chapter I said that Bagshot described a certain maxim as one of "the three golden rules of worldly wisdom." This has naturally set me searching among his papers to find the other two. Clearly Bagshot had three in his own mind, but, oddly enough, whenever he records them on paper, he makes them four or even five. Here, for instance, is a fragment on the subject, dated 10th June, 1894, which I will copy down exactly as it is written:

Be rich among the poor rather than poor among the rich.

Take all but the most important things at their surface value.

Seek the prizes of your own calling and be resolutely *hors concours* to all others.

Never display a wound—except to a physician.

Thus (he adds), you will avoid vain striving for the trivial or the impossible, and, if you suffer hurt, be spared the mortification of thinking that others are witnesses of your discomfiture. Let your physician be a trusty friend who will not break your confidence. Let him see you without your clothes on, but never disrobe to an acquaintance.

Then follows a note upon "surface values": Surface Values

B. asked you to dinner the other night and you enjoyed yourself. You think he called you a bore after you had gone? Very likely he did, but you enjoyed yourself. What more do you want? It was amiable of B. to have been so agreeable to you, if he thinks you a bore.

The Mauleverers asked you to their best house-party and you had three very good days. "Why did they do it?" you keep asking yourself. You are sure that Mrs. Mauleverer dislikes you and wants to get something out of you. Perhaps she does, but you had three very good days, and it

is extremely doubtful if Mrs. Mauleverer will get anything in return.

You went to "The Gaiety Girl" last night, and you grumbled all the time because it wasn't Shakespeare set to Beethoven. To-morrow you are going to a dance—you in your ridiculous forties—and you will yawn and feel aggrieved because it isn't a political dinner-party. You want to go and you want to complain because it isn't something else. There is no help for you.

You can't enjoy a holiday because you have to go back to work next week, nor a rose because it will fade to-morrow, nor your robust middle-age because you are going to be old and decrepit some day. The ground is covered with flowers and you sigh and say the grave is underneath. There is no help for you.

There are about six people in the world whose motives matter to you. Study these, if you will and can, but in regard to all others consider only if what they *do* is agreeable, helpful, or convenient to you, or if what you can *do* is agreeable, helpful,

or convenient to them. What they *think* is of no consequence to you and you will never discover it.

"Seek the Prizes of your own calling"

The other maxims explain themselves, but I find Bagshot returning again to the idea of pursuing your own prizes and being "resolutely *hors concours* to all others." It is the advice which he gives oftenest in his letters to friends and colleagues.

Choose your own world and live in it. Don't, if you are a public servant, expect the applause and notoriety of a public man; don't, if you are a professional man, expect the prizes of what is called "Society"; don't, if you are an artist, expect to shine as an author. There can be no greater folly than to play another man's game on his terms—amateur against professional. In life the champions do not "concede points" to their inferiors. We all start from scratch in each race.

Some mixed maxims

Let me add here a few other notes and maxims gathered from different times:

The world admires the worldling only when it is sure that there are some things in which he is not worldly.

The world forgives the cynic because it believes him to be a *poseur*. It has no mercy on the real thing.

It is a great part of worldly wisdom to recognize other kinds of cleverness than your own. One of the greatest mistakes you can make is to think a man stupid because he isn't clever in your way.

"Charity believeth all things"—but so unfortunately do envy and malice.

If you want to prosper in the worldly sense you had better do the wrong thing in the right way than the right thing in the wrong way.

It was long a belief of rich men that poor men had no right to the gout. In the same way the smart greatly resent the assumption of their follies by the dowdy.

Not only does the world answer the fool according to his folly, but it suspects the suspicious, is hard to the harsh, and thinks ill of those who think meanly of it. The world is as penetrating as a child in dis-

covering and punishing those who dislike it.

"Better is an ass that carrieth me than a horse that layeth me on the ground." It is the greatest folly to seek a position to which your abilities are unequal.

That society is most to be pitied which lives perpetually in a condition of mutual disrespect. Never seek a friendship with those whom you do not respect.

Conform to your kind in everything that is immaterial. It is almost as silly to make it a point of conscience not to wear a coat with gold lace on it, when custom requires it, as it is miserable to desire a gold coat for its own sake.

This last idea is carried on in two entries of the year 1889:

That "incontrollable conscience"

Mr. Gladstone dropped an admirable phrase last night. "The right hon. gentleman, with that incontrollable conscience of his." . . . Surely the *mot juste* and of widest application. How one hates it, that conscience out of control, ranging at large over the trivial, breaking butterflies on wheels,

pouncing on mole-hills and discovering them to be mountains of right and wrong! An incontrollable conscience fails almost invariably to discover a real case of right and wrong.

The prig is he who renders unto God the things that are Caesar's.

It was part of Bagshot's philosophy that in the long run the simple people got the better of the clever people:

Bismarck boasted that he deceived the whole world by telling the truth. It is thus that the simple defeat the clever, but without intending it.

Simplicity is one of the few virtues which cannot be counterfeited. It is often the last touch which great ability needs to make it genius.

Surely one of the most charming tributes to a friend is Martial's to Fabullinus:

> Tam saepe nostrum decipi Fabullinum
> miraris, Aule? semper homo bonus tiro est.

[You wonder, Aulus, that our friend Fabullinus is so often deceived? *A good man is always a novice.*]

Next let me put in a few more observations about friendship: "As between Friends"

Aristotle was right when he said that the test of friendship was to share a friend.

He is no true friend who thinks that he puts a friend under an obligation by doing him a service.

Persistently doing what you don't want to do under the idea that you are sacrificing yourself for others may so embitter your character as to make you intolerable to others.

There are some services which you cannot do to a friend without sacrificing his friendship. I once had the opportunity of extricating a distinguished man from a position which was extremely mortifying to his pride. He was inordinately grateful, but he never forgave me for having known of his catastrophe, and I saw him no more.

If you have to explain to a friend why he has given you offence, you may be sure, in nine cases out of ten, that you are wrong in taking offence.

The sympathy of your friends will be in

inverse ratio to the number of your grievances.

You may have one grievance, but two are dangerous, and three make you absurd. If three people do you an injury, it is advisable to forgive two of them.

CHAPTER XIV

Literature and the Middle-aged

BAGSHOT'S comments touch lightly upon literature in many directions, and he was apparently a wide but rather capricious reader. His anger with the commentators on classics, ancient or modern, I have already noted, and again and again he denounces the rubbish-heaps of irrelevancies which they have accumulated about the text.

> I am making discovery for the first time (he writes in 1900) of a great deal of literature which I supposed myself to know intimately as a boy. Greek plays which I had by heart when I was at school, and still to a considerable extent retain in my memory, large parts of Virgil, Lucretius, Juvenal, Lucian, and in modern literature Dante, Shakespeare, and Bacon, have suddenly possessed me as human documents.

For years I have known the words, and have repeated them mechanically, but now the meaning comes flooding in upon me, and I am struck with my own stupidity in having missed so much of it for so many years. This rediscovery of the familiar and enrichment of it with one's own experience is one of the joys of middle-age, and I give myself great airs about it to the scholarly youths, shaking my head mysteriously and telling them that they will only begin to understand when they have lived my tale of years.

A Test of Genius

Somewhere he has read a saying of Victor Hugo's that "genius is the achievement of the impossible," and he marks it with high approval:

This (he says) and nothing else is what we ordinary people mean when we use the word. Our measure of genius is what we can by no effort of imagination conceive ourselves as doing. If I lived for two hundred years and devoted myself to the writing of poetry, I can conceive myself writing a considerable part of what ap-

pears in most anthologies. A mistake, no doubt, on my part, but still I can conceive it. But I cannot by any flight of imagination conceive myself writing the Ode to a Nightingale, or the Solitary Reaper, or Lycidas, or the invocation in "The Ring and the Book."[1] The first appeal to me as exquisite but attainable accomplishments, the second as miracles, and the miraculous alone is genius.

The Utilitarian rebuked

On the margin of an extremely utilitarian book which questioned the value of literary studies, Bagshot has written Leonardo's observation about his own aphorisms: "I know that many will say this work is useless. . . . Often when I see one of these take this work in his hand, I wonder whether, like a monkey, he will not smell it and ask me if it is something to eat." At the end of an ultra-refined and exceedingly "precious" little volume he has written:—

Taste, like humour, is an intermittent quality. Most of us have moods in which we are very vulgar. It is a common trick

[1] Book I, 1391-1416.

to disguise a vulgar thought in an absurd frippery of language.

Another literary theme on which he dwells is the diabolical perversity of the pen. He quotes Mr. Sludge, the medium:

> Tables do tip
> In the oddest way of themselves, and pens, good Lord,
> Who knows if you drive them or they drive you?

Literary Changelings

I am persuaded (he goes on) that half the literature in the world was written by men who intended to write something entirely different when they took pen in hand. I am perpetually haunted by the things that refuse to be said. To-day I have spent an hour trying to say a comparatively simple thing in a letter to H., and I have said a dozen other things, and entirely failed to say that particular thing. The moment I think I am going to overtake it, it flies off at a tangent and utterly eludes me, or something else crosses the scent, and I am away after that, before I have time to think where I am going. Or else I have a perfectly clear image in my mind for which I can find no words that

even approximately express its form and shape. I start out to describe it, and I describe something which may be quite definite and intelligible, but something which is entirely different from my thought. Much writing is in this way a changeling which the pen has foisted between the author and his thought. This is, I suppose, the reason why writers can seldom bear to read over what they have just written. They put it away for a week, and, having forgotten their thought, complacently accept the changeling in its stead.

An Orchestrated Literature

Thoughts are chords, and words are single notes—for which reason music so often expresses thought more profoundly than speech. Perhaps in another world there will be a kind of orchestrated literature combining the two—a speech of many parts all blending into one immensely enriched meaning. Dante's magical description of Beatrice's speech—*per le sorrise parolette brevi*[1]—has to my ear the effect of a chord by its blending of the voice and the smile in one infinitely caressing phrase.

[1] Paradiso I, 95.

A page later comes this:

A Blending of Men

Perhaps, too, in this other world there will be some way of blending men so as to make good the deficiencies of individuals. I could name twenty men who, if judiciously combined, would make ten men of genius. There is H., who is profound in thought, but incoherent in words; mingle him with A., who is all words, but has no ideas, and you would have one first-class man of letters. There is Y., who is immense in energy, but confused in purpose; mingle him with N., who has the vision of a seer, but is incapable of action, and you would have one statesman of the first class. Or take W., with his beautiful draughtsmanship, and mix him with B., who revels in formless colour, and you will have an artist of the first rank. The rarity in nature is the last gift which makes the others serviceable and coherent. The great man does not so much tower above his fellows as add this final touch to the gifts which they possess.

I pass over much, and come to the last journal of all. I can hardly do better than

transcribe the last three pages exactly as they stand. There is no obvious connection between the entries, yet they seem to work to a sort of undesigned conclusion:

The Shelf of the Disregarded

There are two shelves in my library wholly reserved for old books that are quite dead. Nothing goes there that anyone has heard of, and I test them occasionally by bringing an eminent bibliophile to inspect them. If there is any one of them that he knows or has heard of, it is straightway banished. For this is the home of the disregarded, and it is pleasant to think that the ghosts of their authors may sometimes visit them, and take comfort when they see me finger them, and browse on their faded pages, as I often do. For there is a certain charm in their artless inferiority, and, better than the masters, they help me to realize the common thoughts of average folk who have otherwise left no records. One of the falsities of history and literature is that the average life is transmitted to us through the distorting medium of genius, and this might be corrected, if we could unearth the

average people and let them speak for themselves. A society for the study of forgotten books would have more to say for itself than many other learned bodies.

Some Random Observations.

How seldom one meets a clever man who has enough conscience not to beat a stupid one by a bad argument.

Of a certain politician: X. so enjoys the luxury of differing from other people that, though a Conservative in politics, he prefers to call himself a Liberal and differ from the Liberal Party than to call himself a Conservative and agree with the Conservative Party.

The whole of metaphysics lurks in the tenses of an ordinary verb. If you know the meaning of "am," "will," "shall," and "was," you have fathomed the secrets of existence.

Luther began by extolling reason as "something divine," and ended by calling it "that ugly devil's bride"; Cromwell began by extolling liberty, and ended by "taking away that bauble."

Two kinds of Life

I talked yesterday to a man who has won his way up from the working-class to a distinguished position among public men, and I asked him—putting wealth and ambition aside—which was, day by day, the more pleasurable existence. He answered, to my surprise, that the workman's life was, beyond all comparison, the more pleasurable—that he had never had the same pleasure as in the evening's rest after a day at the foundry, or as on a Sunday after a week's hard toil. No work was so exhilarating, no leisure so rich and peaceful. Compare with this the depression of the brain-worker, the absence of any sharp boundary between his work and his leisure, the constant slopping over of the one into the other, the restlessness of intellectual fatigue, and the pitiful shifts to which the intellectual man was reduced in his effort to supply the physical element which was lacking in his artificial life. Life for life, no natural healthy man would hesitate for a moment to choose the hand-working in preference to the brain-working life. "I hope it is true," adds Bagshot, "but only

those who have tried both have the right to say it. The *intellectuel* who says it exposes himself to the suspicion of doing so, in order, as Bacon put it, 'to abate the edge of envy.'"

Life's Great Irony

Life's great irony is that achievement defeats itself in the moment of its victory. *Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem.* The poet has scarcely finished before the historian takes up the tale of the Decline and Fall. Our Paradise may be lost and regained, but never held and enjoyed. We develop our brains and pay by the decay of our bodies; we refine our tastes and pay by the decay of our morals; we become humane and find that we have lost our endurance, we enjoy the blessings of peace and find that our bones are full of water. There is stupendous energy of building up, stupendous energy of tearing down, but no moment of repose for the atom or the planet or the human spirit. The city of the soul whirls and vibrates like a machine-shop fitted with dynamos. Yet, somewhere in the heart of it all, the individual can make his own peace on his own

terms and defy the whole universe to disturb it. It still matters nothing to me that the earth and the solar system are whirling through space at the rate of sixty miles a second from no one knows where to no one knows whither, if I may sit in my garden and listen to the bees on a summer afternoon.

* * * * *

The last entry of all is another aphorism from Leonardo: The Last Entry

Thou, O God, sellest all good things at the price of labour.

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